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CONTENTS

EDUCATION BY BOOK CLUB? by *H. A. Mason* *page* 240
THE ROLE OF THE ONLOOKER, by *D. W. Harding* 247
DIABOLIC INTELLECT AND THE NOBLE HERO: A Note on *Othello*, by *F. R. Leavis* 259
JEAN WIENER AND MUSIC FOR ENTERTAINMENT, by *W. H. Mellers* 284
Revengers against Time, by *Ronald Bottrall* 303
COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 304
Trahison des Clercs, Gide's *Retour* and *Retouches*, reviewed by H. A. Mason (p. 304). CHINESE POETS AND OTHERS, reviews by W.H.M. (p. 306). *The Fall of the City*, reviewed by T. R. Barnes (p. 310). VITALITY IN SOCIAL SURVEYS, *Middletown in Transition* and *May the Twelfth*, reviewed by D. W. Harding (p. 313). A PLAN FOR PUBLIC TASTE, *Industrial Art in England*, reviewed by J. M. Harding (p. 316). THERE'S ONLY ONE STURT, *The Carpenter's Shop*, reviewed by F. C. Tinkler (p. 325). G.B.S. AND THE PROBLEM OF MUSIC CRITICISM, *London Music in 1888-99 As Heard by Corno di Bassetto*, reviewed by W. H. Mellers (p. 328). THE CASE OF MISS DOROTHY SAYERS, reviews by Q. D. Leavis (p. 334). ELIZABETHAN READING MATTER AND ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE, *Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England*, reviewed by L. C. Knights (p. 341). SHAKESPEARE AND MEDIAEVAL THOUGHT, *Shakespeare's Philosophical Patterns*, reviewed by R. G. Cox (p. 348). 'THE BOOK OF THE WEEK,' *Daylight and Champaign*, reviewed by Geoffrey Walton (p. 350). THE WILD, UNTUTORED PHOENIX, *Phoenix*, reviewed by F. R. Leavis (p. 352).

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EDUCATION BY BOOK CLUB?

THE pullulation of Book Clubs is of undoubted interest, even if it is difficult to determine what exactly it portends. The central idea of offering books at a reduced rate, but without giving the reader a choice, and committing him to the purchase of a fixed number has proved applicable in a variety of fields. For example, a single number of *The Spectator* announces the inauguration of two Book Clubs: one sponsored by the Student Christian Movement has enrolled ten thousand members in practically no time, while a purely literary Book Club with Mr. T. F. Powys on the Board of Selectors claims to have found over ten thousand readers for its first choice. It is probable that the success of ' The Left Book Club ' has stimulated these efforts and that considerable changes in book production will be one of the happiest consequences of this enterprise. Indeed, those with a professional interest in the selling of books will find much to instruct them in the experience of the L.B.C.: the resistance to paper covers, for example, and the dislike of thin paper (' not value for money '). One might further conjecture that the L.B.C. has at last found a means of inducing people to buy books who would never have thought of it before.

The L.B.C. is a complex phenomenon: an adequate examination of all that it involves would require several kinds of competence. The main interest here is, as in the case of the nearest previous parallel, the Book Society, to discover what effect it has upon the maintenance of standards in the reading public. It is fortunately one of the chief pretensions of the Club to perform precisely such a service—but in the political and social sphere. The aims of the Club have been given various formulations at different times by its sponsors, but the formation of ' an educated public opinion ' has always been given a prominent place. Professor Laski, indeed, seems to go even further: ' We are fighting here in this Club,' he says, ' to maintain the traditions of civilization.' After reviewing the achievements of the Club, he writes: ' All this, in little over a year, seems to me something that is a definite contribution to the clarification of the public mind.'

Before proceeding further with these claims a frank disclaimer is in place. Though in origin a Book Club, the L.B.C. has developed

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into something far more comprehensive. And in any case, it would hardly be fair to settle these claims on the merits of the books themselves. In the first place, authoritative works cannot be had for the asking, and if commissioned, take many months, if not years, to produce. More important is the treatment they receive both at the hands of the sponsors and of the members of the Club. Here again there arises a difficulty. Time and again the sponsors have rightly insisted that the whole venture depends for its success on the careful reading of the books and the discussion of the questions raised in them. The happy idea was conceived of forming local groups all over the country to conduct such discussions. I doubt whether anybody knows what goes on in all these groups, and certainly to generalize on a limited experience would be excessively hardy. Fortunately the L.B.C. publishes a monthly bulletin of information, and it is on the evidence of the *Left Book News* that the outside reader must rely.

From these pages one can at once discover a sharply limiting feature ; it is a theory (whether sound or not is not here relevant) that in a surprisingly short time we shall be faced with a grave crisis, most probably a war with the enemies of democracy. It is therefore necessary in the first place to persuade as many people as possible in the short time available that this theory is sound, and then to instruct them in the best means of defence ' against War and Fascism.' One cannot sufficiently admire the ingenuity which has gone into the proposals for increasing membership. Money has not been spared on advertisement. In almost every number we are told that ' the supply of leaflets is unlimited.' Discussions are associated with social activities, such as hiking and swimming. But one may well ask what sort of education can keep pace with this high-speed advertising campaign, and whether propaganda—that is, absorption without discussion—is the only kind of product that can be assimilated. Indeed, in all that follows—and it will appear that some good has been done—it must be remembered that much of the time that might have been given to reflection—to the education of a few—has been devoted to obtaining the minimum adherence of as great a number as possible.

There are further consequences of a membership of over forty thousand. The most obvious is that when one has passed a much lower figure one has exhausted the number of those who at the

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moment are prepared to study seriously what the L.B.C. can offer. If the surplus is to be retained and given ' value for money,' something less austere must be provided. Consequently we find assurances (reminiscent of the Book Society's worst) that such and such a book is ' as easy to read and understand as any novel from the circulating library,' or ' is as exciting and thrilling in parts as a wild west novel.' Indeed, a special form of membership has been created to accommodate readers who will take almost exclusively books coming under this category. Though it is difficult to obtain statistics, personal enquiry (*pace* Mr. Gollancz) suggests that so far from creating a reading habit, the regular reception of an imposed book dulls the appetite, and that apart from these popular books which they designate ' the Macartney type ' the more serious works remain on the shelves unread.

The sponsors of the Club (Messrs. Gollancz, Laski & Strachey) of course deplore these tendencies ; but they cannot themselves be altogether excused from the charge of fostering an uncritical approach. For in their monthly *News* appear so-called reviews of the choices, often by one or other of those responsible for the choice. Now sometimes this does not prevent (at least in the case of reviews by Professor Laski) a useful and balanced estimate of the book. But too often we are given completely uncritical ' write-ups,' well below the level of ordinary left wing journalism. To choose one example out of many, Mr. Gollancz endorses Mr. Strachey's opinion that *Days of Contempt* by André Malraux is ' the first completely successful and satisfying revolutionary short novel.' Again, too often the only criticisms that are offered occur when a book offends against stock socialist positions. The danger here is that the Club may begin a further extension of the lazy book-reading habit, comparable to that made by Northcliffe in the newspaper world.

The Club offers what amounts to a system of education. Dr. Lewis, the Group Organiser, writes of a summer conference: ' A year of constructive work ought to follow a conference like this, and we are hoping that it will be followed next year by another School on a much larger scale . . . Why not, in fact, something rather like a Left Wing University.' This Summer School, held as Digswell Park, perhaps exemplifies better than anything else the spirit of the groups throughout the country. The following extracts from an account of the school hardly need any

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comment. 'Two elements were very noticeably present at the school, the emotional and the rational representatives of each would approach Dr. Lewis in turn: "I want to criticize the last lecture; it was far too hostile and cold in its attitude towards the Soviet Union," then another: "You know, Dr. Lewis, I think the last lecture was the best we've had; it is such a relief to listen to someone dispassionate and unbiassed after the dose of apostolic fervour we had before; a critical lecture does much more credit to the intelligence of the audience after all" . . . as the School proceeded it became apparent that both these rational and emotional elements were going to be satisfied . . . As it was, every single member of the School received the maximum intellectual stimulus . . . During all this the Conference Film gradually took shape . . . A story runs through the film. A lady who intended visiting the *Right Book Conference* at "*Prigswell Park*" finds herself at Digswell by mistake; her car is out of order and she is forced to stop; her consternation and dismay; her utter aloofness; aloofness gradually broken down by the naturalness and the friendliness of everyone she meets; the awakening of her interest; "If Socialists are like this, I should like to know some more about them"; and the final shot when her car leaves the drive, a Join the Left Book Club poster on the back; pamphlets and books inside; the woman herself a different person. She has found something to work for. By this means every activity of the School is put on permanent record and Left Book Club Groups will also be able to see it . . . in retrospect.'

'The whole success of the Groups really depends on one thing,' writes Dr. Lewis, 'the conduct of regular discussions on the books.' The second element in the educational system is the teachers, here the discussion leaders. The following extract from instructions to leaders will give some idea of the kind of teaching involved.

> '(1) It is a good plan to ask all members to bring their books with them, and for the opener to direct their attention to certain important passages and actually read these aloud. I have been present at discussions where there was a good deal of confusion, just because nobody really knew what arguments the opener was talking about, and what he had to say lost its value because he failed to quote aloud from the book under discussion.

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(2) The leader, must, of course, have studied the book *very carefully* before venturing to open a discussion. We send a copy of the discussion syllabus to every convener, and to everyone writing in and requesting us to send them a copy. Conveners can get extra copies to hand to those who are going to open the discussion. These syllabuses will help the opener really *to get to the heart of the subject.*'

(To judge from what I have seen of these syllabuses it would be more accurate to say that they reinforce the reviews, that is, they give an adequate summary and then draw attention to points which illustrate the Club's position. They presuppose an extreme inability to handle reading matter, and while they do not further critical reading they help considerably to ' get across ' the point of view approved by the sponsors).

'(3) But in addition to all this it is clear that we must more and more make use of specially trained discussion leaders, and we already have classes running to prepare people to open discussions.'

Yet another extract quoted with approval in the *Left News* suggests that this training may not be in the interests of education. ' One of our speakers writes, " In regard to *The Road To Wigan Pier*, I think this book has exercised our wits more than any other of the previous books . . . Why I say this is, that although some of the books have been excellent, they haven't given us grounds for controversy. When we have finished reading Palme Dutt's brilliant historical analysis, or Strachey's splendid, crystal-clear outline of the theory and practice of Socialism, all we can do is to nod our heads and say, " Yes comrades, you are right." But when Orwell shows us in the second part of his book what is going on in his mind, he enrages the most pacific among us, and then we sit up and sharpen our brains so as to refute his erroneous notions." '

About the books which form the basis of the system of education it is more difficult to generalize. One group is concerned with giving evidence about our Enemies (the ' Fascist ' states) and our Friends (the U.S.S.R., France, Spain, China). That they vary greatly in accuracy and objectivity would not be apparent to a reader of the review sent out with each copy. What he would

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be aware of is the ' lessons ' which he must draw from the text. To take an example, for Mr. Strachey the value of *Hitler the Pawn* lies (apart from the facts of Hitler's life) in the lessons which ' emerge all the more strongly because Herr Olden does not draw these himself and has not, I fancy, learned them.' The socialist ' knows ' that Hitler is the agent of the capitalist class and he can automatically correct any ' errors ' (*cf.* the ' erroneous notions ' quoted above). ' For to any socialist, at any rate, these defects are so obvious that they can be easily discounted. The truth is that Herr Olden writes from a purely and indeed, narrowly liberal point of view ; that he has scarcely any understanding of the class struggle or of the German working class movement.' Where correction of this kind is not found necessary, an interesting light is thrown on the expectations of the sponsors by the fact that mere descriptions are often sent out with the books, in the place of reviews.

Another group of books expound directly some political point of view. Mr. Strachey, for example, brings Marx up to date with the help of the Russian example. A number of books bear on the question of a ' popular front.' It is among these books, naturally, that the worst excesses occur. And in the reviews of these books the voice of the salesman often blends perfectly with that of the propagandist. It is perhaps excusable that books so confusedly, and perhaps hastily, written as *Forward from Liberalism* should be included in the attempt to clarify the public mind. But Professor Laski, in his review, found it an important book.

There are books specially designed for special groups, pacifists, Christians, children (for there is a Junior Left Book Club). One series is specifically labelled ' educational '—' each to be rather less than half the length of an ordinary novel, and to be written very simply, and without assuming any previous knowledge on the part of the reader.' There have already appeared *A Short History of the Russian Revolution* and *An Introduction to Philosophy*. Another group is formed by reprints of what are styled ' classics,' such as *The Town Labourer*, Strachey's *Coming Struggle for Power*, *A Handbook of Marxism* (with an inaccurate text).

It follows that only in the case of a restricted number of books can the efforts of the L.B.C. meet with complete approval.

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Mr. Gollancz says of the members: 'they pride themselves on being propagandists *when they are sure about an idea or fact*' (my italics). No one can refuse to applaud the dissemination of sound ideas and verified observations on social and political matters. But how often can one unhesitatingly declare them to be sound or verified? In putting forward such a claim so much seems to have been taken for granted by Mr. Gollancz that the result of successful propagation would seem to lead to the creation of a uniform acceptance he rightly loathes. On the other hand, it is clear that it would be a very great advantage (if one may risk an example) if everyone were to accept and absorb the evidence provided by Dr. McGonigle on the effects of malnutrition, even though it meant ignoring the marginal criticisms offered by experts. But no such defence could be made for what is written about (to risk another example) the U.S.S.R. No one could know if confined to L.B.C. material that Russia was anything but an example to admire, or that our liberties, such as they are, compare favourably with those enjoyed there.

It is clear then (always pending the arrival of a crisis) that what the L.B.C. stands most in need of is a stricter maintenance of the standards they profess. It is easy to see what would be gained by placing the direction on a broader basis, by the inclusion of other talents, and how the practice of criticism among the members would be assisted by the example of the directors. One may point here to the more fortunate position of 'La Maison de la Culture' in France which can mobilize a large proportion of the great names in any cultural sphere. Yet on the assumption that only a short period is left in which to do anything, it is equally clear that the objectives of the L.B.C. can only be to secure a limited agreement, say on a specific policy at a specific time. Such being the case, the actual quality of the books need not seriously influence the result. Here the discussion passes beyond the limits imposed at the outset. Yet it seems in order to remark that however admirable the political position of the L.B.C. may be (and on the 'United Front' issue, for instance, I detect signs of disingenuous quibbling and downright intolerance) the instructions that have been and will have to be passed down cannot claim the name of education; it is one thing to achieve simplification and another to obtain 'the clarification of the public mind.'

H. A. MASON.

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THE ROLE OF THE ONLOOKER

THE novel reader or playgoer who knows well enough that he at least is not indulging in escape, that he is not passive, that he enjoys no vicarious satisfaction, may sometimes find himself wondering what, more positively, he is doing. He is not passive, but is he active in quite the same way as the man digging a ditch or the scientist bringing facts into order? He makes a full imaginative response to a fiction, but this somehow is not escaping from reality—although, on the other hand, he doesn't fall into the error of thinking about the characters of plays or novels as real people. He concerns himself instead, as we know, with the total pattern they contribute to. But is this pattern the same kind of pattern as he might find in an abstract painting or a piece of music?

These confusions and doubts are of course perversely naïve, but the uncertainty they point to is not entirely sham, at least in my own mind. And although they raise questions whose detail and comprehensiveness alike take them beyond the range of an article, I want to attempt a naïve and explicit statement of one idea that touches them all: that of the part played by the spectator or reader. What is the nature of his response? What mode of activity is he engaged in? Or, to put it differently, with what other modes of activity do we tacitly contrast his response?

To answer this question, I suggest, we need to distinguish four modes of activity. The first is what would universally be recognized as ' activity ': ' actually doing things,' or, for the sake of a distinguishing term, an operative response. Next comes the intellectual comprehension of things and events around us, a response which stops at comprehension and involves no attempt to control or modify what is comprehended. The third mode of activity consists in looking at things or listening to them, not in order to use them or to understand them intellectually, but simply for the sake of experiencing them and organizing them at the level of perception. The fourth mode of response is that of detached

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evaluation, and it is in this that the role of the spectator typically consists.

These divisions must be examined in some detail. But first it should be observed that they possess no value implications. Within each mode of activity may be found pursuits of every degree of complexity, skill and value, from the trivial occupations of idle moments to the most significant undertakings we are capable of. And for a preliminary description it seems most convenient to identify them under their trivial forms, as they appear when we are more or less idling, but always with the implication that the more highly developed and complex forms of activity fall into the same broad divisions.

At the level of idling there may first be observed a wide range of pursuits in which we are, as we say, actually ' doing ' something, as distinct from thinking or watching, talking or imagining. It may be throwing stones, collecting shells, dismembering flies, paddling, playing patience, whittling at a bit of wood, rubbing a tiki smoother and smoother, smoking and drinking. In all these we are controlling some feature of our surroundings: we maintain it or modify it according as it does or does not meet our desires or the impulses of the moment. Or, of course, we may only be seeking to control it or wishing helplessly that we could, but in this case our concern with the environment is basically the same. For the sake of a name we may speak of this as the operative relationship to objects or events. It is the most familiar and the best understood.

Secondly, amongst the occupations of idleness there occurs a whole class of which the only satisfaction is ' getting to understand things ' ; exploring places, finding out how toys work, watching birds to discover their habits, and so forth. Here it may be convenient to follows such writers as Spranger and refer to these as ' theoretical ' pursuits, using the term to describe every kind of activity in which comprehension is aimed at for its own sake. It goes without saying that in all activity, including the operative, some effort of comprehension is bound to occur ; but it usually occurs as a means to the satisfaction of some other desire. In the theoretical relationship to events, the effort of understanding and systematizing our experience is made for the direct satisfaction which that gives, as an end in itself. At one level of complexity we call it ' idle curiosity,' at another, ' devotion to science,' and

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it comprises, of course, an immense part of human activity.

The third sort of idle pastime is just to watch things or listen to them—a stretch of landscape, say, or birds flying, or the rhythm made by the wheels of a train—and to do this without attempting any intellectual comprehension but simply enjoying the experience at the perceptual level. This is rather rare among the relaxations. For what usually happens is that people look, not at the pattern of a countryside, but at an impressive 'view' or a peaceful 'view,' rich in emotional associations; and this, as I hope to show, is the fourth kind of relationship, the evaluative. The purely perceptual contemplation to be considered for the moment may occur, for instance, if, when we see waves breaking, we watch them until we have grasped as a perceptual whole the broad rhythm of their approaching, climbing, breaking and washing back, and can then see each new wave as slightly varying the pattern without destroying it. It occurs whenever we attend to the visual design of a picture or building or the auditory pattern of a piece of music. It need hardly be said that the perceptual pattern of a work of art is closely associated, and may seem to fuse, with other aspects, with its representational significance and its direct emotional effect. But our interest in pattern, whether in art or elsewhere, remains distinguishable as the effort simply to extend and refine our perceptual experience and to unify it into increasingly complex or subtle wholes, always at the level of perception.

Here, as with all these distinctions, it would be absurd to suggest that any one kind of relationship to events was likely to occur in isolation. We are constantly 'doing something' to objects in order the better to enjoy looking at them; as we do when we add some leaves to a bunch of flowers to break up the masses and vary the colour. And at more complex levels the painter or musician, in so far as his concern is with perceptual patterns, spends his time in operative activity—'doing'—in order to produce something to contemplate perceptually, something to look at or listen to. In most activity we must of course expect a continuous fusion of operative response, intellectual comprehension, perceptual enjoyment, and the fourth—the evaluative—form of response. Yet though they are no more than aspects or phases of a complex whole, one or other generally predominates and gives

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the total activity certain characteristics that ordinary discussion naturally attempts to distinguish.

Both the second and third of these modes of response—comprehension and perceptual contemplation—may be regarded as a form of looking on, but the typical spectator is far more commonly engaged in an evaluative response. This is the fourth mode of activity which has to be distinguished. At a street accident the spectators are thrilled or horrified, pitying, or perhaps ironic ; they may judge one or other of the participants to have been at fault, they may reflect on the stupidities of modern transport. In all this they remain, as we say, ' detached.' But though they make no direct operative response they still assess the event in the light of all the interests, desires, sentiments and ideals that they can relate it to ; and they feel it to be noteworthy, commonplace, agreeable or disagreeable, tragic, funny, contemptible, heroic—to mention a few of the cruder responses. The theoretical viewpoint, the effort at intellectual comprehension, is inextricably involved; but once value judgments have been made the spectator's relationship to the event has gone beyond mere comprehension. The same may be said of looking at crops and cattle and appreciating the prosperity of a countryside, enjoying the peacefulness of a river, being impressed by the power and ingenuity of a machine, experiencing mixed feelings at seeing a stoat kill a rabbit, wondering at the coolness of steeplejacks, and so on over an enormous range of everyday experience. It is in this detached, non-operative evaluation that the spectator's role most commonly consists.

Evaluation or assessment of our situation is going on in some form every moment of our lives ; even in sleep it continues, and we shift about to get more comfortable, or wake up altogether if disturbances around us seem to require it. But in such circumstances we are not regarded as spectators, for the assessment is in direct preparation for an operative response. Similarly the typical role of spectator is not found in situations where we wish to participate and are unable to. The thwarting of an operative response gives rise to such experiences as grief, envy, helpless fury, resignation, rebellious disappointment, or remorse. These emotions arise on occasions when our evaluation is clearly preparatory to action but the action is either unsuccessful or has

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to be inhibited. We are in the physical position of the spectator without having his detachment. And in everyday speech we are then said not to be 'merely looking on' but to be 'looking on helplessly.'

Nor is the typical spectator the man who neglects to make an operative response that is expected of him, the man whom we accuse of 'looking on indifferently.' The type of spectator with whom a study of leisure pursuits is concerned neither tries unsuccessfully nor neglects an obligation to participate in what is going on. What, then, is the nature of the bond between the onlooker and the event? And—the corollary of this question—in what sense is the onlooker detached? These questions must be answered before the role of the onlooker can be understood. And for the sake of simplicity I wish first to consider only the onlooker who watches actual events, watches events for what they are and not for what they portray, and to leave till later the spectator at a play or the reader of a novel who is offered representations of events.

In the first place a scene may secure the onlooker's interest because it discloses or makes more vivid to him certain of the possibilities of his surroundings, possibilities which, although not directly involving him at the moment, must yet affect his expectations. Our hopes and anxieties for ourselves and other people very largely depend upon what we have learnt, as spectators, of the possibilities that surround us. Our interest in these possibilities extends beyond the desire to comprehend them intellectually. They are relevant to our other desires and values; we not only comprehend them, we are glad or sorry about them on account of the significance they have for ourselves, for our friends or perhaps for people in general.

But besides this it may safely be said that no event would secure our attention as spectators unless we were bound by some sentiment or ideal, however slight and weak, to the people or things which were directly involved. One factor governing the strength of our concern, therefore, will be the intensity of the sentiment that binds us to the participant; and just as the strength of our sentiments and ideals varies by imperceptible degrees so does the extent of our detachment or involvement when looking on at an event. The adversities and the good fortune of a very

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close friend may affect the spectator even more than they would have done if they had happened to himself ; those of a slight acquaintance or a stranger make him somewhat concerned or rather pleased. The slight bond between him and the stranger consists in the liking and sympathy he has for the stranger perhaps as a human being, as a fellow-countryman, as a foreign visitor, as a child, as an old person, as one in misfortune, or as a member of a social class or of a sex, and so on through the innumerable categories represented in the organization of our sentiments and ideals.

The intensity of the attitudes evoked in us as spectators therefore depends on two things: the strength of the sentiment that binds us to the participant, and the importance of the event in the light of our own values. From this fact there spring subtle differences between, for instance, seeing a stranger badly injured and seeing a very close friend suffering from toothache ; the intensity of our disturbance may be just about the same in the two cases, but the difference between the distresses occasioned by each is perfectly—sometimes disturbingly—evident to us. So too news of the rescue of national idols, lost explorers or airmen, may give us about the same degree of relief or elation as we get from hearing that an acquaintance has passed an examination. Peculiarities of temperament and character and habits of mind will also affect the question of the onlooker's degree of detachment, but apart from that it will depend on the seriousness of the event and the strength of the sentiments or ideals binding the spectator to the participant.

Detached evaluative responses, though less intense, tend to be more widely comprehensive than the evaluation which precedes participation. One views the event in a more distant perspective and relates it to a more extensive system of information, beliefs and values. And this detached evaluative response undoubtedly possesses the utmost importance in building up, confirming and modifying all but the very simplest of our values. It is as onlookers from a distance that we can most readily endure the penetration of general principles among our sentiments. Broadly humane sentiments towards negroes, for instance, are more easily met with in England and Holland than in South Africa or the Old South of

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the United States. Similarly the first contingents of exiles and refugees, whether Belgians, German Jews or Basques, are welcomed more eagerly than later arrivals, for the latter are no longer merely representatives of distressed humanity but people who are now known to possess displeasing habits and peculiar traits of personality. The event we look on at from a distance affects us, but it is set in a wider context than the urgencies of participating relationships usually permit us to call up around events. And for this reason, if we could obliterate the effects on a man of all the occasions when he was ' merely a spectator ' it would be profoundly to alter his character and outlook.

The greater the social saturation of our environment the more strongly and extensively will our personality be influenced by the scenes we look on at. But the social environment is not essential to their effect. In a completely non-human environment we may still be influenced by what we see of animal life and natural forces. It may be birds feeding their young, the sea undermining cliffs, hares at the mating season, ivy smothering a tree—scenes like this affect the observer's future expectations, they establish his belief of what is ' the kind of thing that does happen ' and even of what is natural and what isn't. Their importance may therefore be enormous even when there is a minimum of social preparation for interpreting them.

In an environment which is highly saturated socially, where dandelions are weeds and sunflowers plants, where dogs are fed and rabbits eaten, or where a heather-covered hillside looks just like a picture and a snowfall makes everything seem Christmassy, there our experience as spectators will have even greater effectiveness in our cultural moulding. Everything we look on at is tacitly and unintentionally treated as an object lesson by our fellow-spectators ; speech and gesture, smiles, nudges, clucks, tuts and glances are constantly at work to sanction or correct the feelings we have as spectators. (Needless to say, our fellow-onlookers' influence need not be only positive—it may be largely inverse if we tend towards indocility and negativism). Reciprocally, of course, we are sanctioning and challenging our fellows. And when we are not in the physical presence of others their moulds are still shaping our behaviour even if only by suggesting what we can do now that we're alone for once.

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This, then, is one direction in which our experience as spectators gains significance from the social saturation of our environment. Equally important are the processes that may take place when the events which we watch involve other human beings and a social relationship is established between them and the onlooker. As soon as the participant becomes aware, however faintly and however tacitly, of the attitude of the observer to him, the social process of reciprocal sanctioning or challenging has begun. It may be the faintest of attitudes, friendly or hostile, respectful or wondering, it may be the merest trace of sympathy, amusement, pity, but once it has occurred and been detected, whether openly admitted or not, the participant and the onlooker are influencing each other ; either confirming or challenging the values that each has expressed in his behaviour or attitude.

This process is greatly intensified when the relationship has been openly admitted and some people are fulfilling the explicit role of spectator before others who perform to them ; when we have passed, that is, from the state of idly watching men repairing roads, people gathering in crowds, marrying, fighting, dancing, burying, and playing games for their own amusement, and have accepted the invitation to form part of an audience for jugglers, acrobats, professional footballers, or speedway riders. When this point has been reached we may speak of display entertainment: a social situation, that is, which comprises not only display but the intention of display, and implies an audience which has come expecting to be interested and which offers some degree of approbation or disapproval.

In this way our attitude as spectators, although not directly operative, does come to have an effect on what is done and what is valued in our social group. The members of an appreciative audience are in effect assuring the performer and one another that what he is doing is worth doing ; a view that he, of course, equally implies by having undertaken the performance. This sanctioning effect is more significant in other forms of entertainment still to be discussed, but even in display entertainment it is obviously effective as a means of reinforcing certain of the community's values. Gate money, newspaper descriptions, and supporters' clubs are the footballer's assurance from his community, and its members reiteration to each other, that what he does is a good thing to do.

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The role of the spectator cannot be at all fully understood until some attention has been given to the further range of possibility opened up when we pass from direct experience of our surroundings to that represented symbolically. The vast importance of representation for operative and theoretical activities is obvious ; achievements that would be impossible without language, mathematical symbols and notations of every kind are an essential part of our civilization.

In perceptual contemplation, it goes without saying, there is little representation ; in that mode of response we are concerned exclusively with the appearance of things, not with what they stand for. One of the few clear exceptions is found in the representation of depth in a picture ; the perceptual pattern may be formed in three dimensions, and to grasp it even at the perceptual level we must have seen certain of the lines and shapes as representing a third dimension. A further exception perhaps occurs, though this is more doubtful, if the perceptual design ever depends upon represented movement ; El Greco's ' Laocoon ' is possibly an instance. In general we should have to say that representation is important in this mode of response only when the conceptual meaning of the material in some way affects our perception of it.

It is in the spectator's detached evaluative relationship to experience that the vastly increased scope achieved by representation most concerns us. We commonly think of such representation as the means by which one person communicates with another, but first it must be observed that the representation of experience may be entirely private, as in day-dreaming and solitary make-believe play. Here we represent possibilities to ourselves, usually pleasant or in some way satisfying possibilities, our evaluation of them going on simultaneously with—being in fact indistinguishable from—our representation of them. What we represent may be actual experiences from our own past, things that have happened to others but which we now transfer to ourselves, or merely possibilities of experience.

In this connection a word must be said about fairy tales and other fantasies that assume physically impossible happenings. Whether these are communicated to others or remain private their significance for our present purpose remains the same: the physical impossibility as such is not what we are most interested in ; it is merely the least laborious and most vivid means of representing

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some quite possible piece of human experience. Everyone has a bit of luck from time to time: the three miraculous wishes provide a dramatic compression of that possibility and allow the consequences to be discussed. Anyone might be down-trodden and finally be given a helping hand and succeed in turning the tables; a fairy godmother is a vivid way of saying how delightful that would be. We may use Coleridge's phrase, perhaps, and say that the fairy tale involves a 'willing suspension of disbelief,' but here, I think, the phrase means simply that we are acquiescing in a recognized technique of communication about the possibilities of life—the familiar 'suppose' technique of children's conversation. In the works of Hans Andersen this presentation and discussion of possibilities in human experience is always evident (and sometimes obtrusive); in the older traditional tales it may be less insistent and a little overshadowed at times by a simpler interest in wonders (which is not the same as an acceptance of the impossible). But it is probably never absent, even if to find it we have to go to psycho-analysis for a less obvious interpretation of the manifest story.

To return to day-dreaming and play, it must be noted that every degree of abandonment to the recalled or invented situation may occur. We may at times, as it were, give it no more than a sceptical glance, perhaps contrasting it immediately with our present situation; we may allow it to develop great vividness and yet remain only onlookers, never letting our real surroundings be far beyond the margins of attention and always being able at the least necessity to switch back to where we really are; or it may reach the extreme vividness, obliterating everything else, that the night dream possesses, and then, whether as day-dreamers or madmen, we have abandoned the role of onlooker and given ourselves up to hallucinated participation.

When we stop representing the possibilities of experience privately and begin to communicate them, two important features of social life arise. The first, occurring mostly among children, is co-operative make-believe play. The second is gossip.

In the former all who take part have combined in themselves the roles of both entertainer and audience: they are representing possibilities of experience—for instance of being teachers and children, hosts and guests, tradesmen and customers—and simul-

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taneously, in their role of audience, they are evaluating them. Make-believe play is a co-operative day-dreaming, and all that has been said concerning the gradual approach to hallucinated participation in day-dreaming applies here too. Especially it should be noted that in most make-believe play nothing approximating closely to hallucination ever does occur—the child too easily switches back from being a teacher or a mother and becomes a child playing a game of make-believe.

This is not to overlook the fact that some roles are preferred and competed for ; it is more thrilling to contemplate the possibility that *I* am the teacher or mother than merely that someone is, or that you are. Here the term ' vicarious satisfaction ' offers itself temptingly. I believe (though it is a difficult point, on which opinion naturally wavers) that we should reserve this term for hallucinated participation, and that hallucinated participation does not necessarily or usually occur in make-believe play. But this point is the nucleus of rather far-reaching psychological problems, and in an article of this length it must be neglected.

Gossip is the second method through which the possibilities of experience—reported or imagined—may be communicated and evaluated. Here the roles of entertainer and audience have been differentiated, and we can observe a faint approach towards formal entertainment (especially when a social group extrudes a recognized raconteur or wit). Gossip still differs from formal entertainment, however, in two ways. For one thing the roles of entertainer and audience are passed backwards and forwards from one person to another. And, further, the audience's attitude—of agreement, emphatic or qualified, or of disagreement—may be expressed directly and promptly to the speaker. But the essential fact in gossip as in entertainment is that the speaker who raises a topic is presenting what he takes to be an interesting situation—actual or possible—in what he regards as an appropriate light. He expects his hearers to agree on the interest of the situation and the fittingness of his attitude, whether it be the hushed fascination with which he talks of cancer or his truculent satisfaction at the nation's increased armaments.

The playwright, the novelist, the song-writer and the film-producing team are all doing the same thing as the gossip, however innocent they may be of witting propagandist intentions. Each invites his audience to agree that the experience he portrays is

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possible and interesting, and that his attitude to it, implicit in his portrayal, is fitting. In the less developed levels of entertainment the process is chiefly one of reinforcing commonplace values in a trivially varied array of situations. In the representational arts, most obviously in literature, the author invites his audience to share in an exploration, an extension and refinement, of his and their common interests ; and, as a corollary, to refine or modify their value judgments. (What he regards as a development, of course, they may consider retrograde). If this development of interest and refinement of judgment occur at all in entertainment they occur so gradually, and with such careful consolidation of each change, as never to demand any great degree of plasticity in opinion or feeling from the audience. If any serious degree of exploration does find its way into an entertainment programme it is commonly claimed as ' art ' by those who like it and decried as high-brow or immoral by the rest.

Where do these considerations lead? They answer no question, but they perhaps suggest a different formulation of some and draw attention to others that are neglected. They discourage attempts at over-simple statements of the difference between ' art ' and ' entertainment,' since they make it less certain that the arts or even the entertainments form a homogeneous category of quite the kind they are sometimes supposed to. They invite a rather more considered statement of the notions behind the terms active and passive in such contexts as this. And they suggest that the ideas of vicarious satisfaction and escape may deserve closer scrutiny.

This view of the onlooker's mode of activity also raises general questions of criticism. Are the same standards applicable in criticizing achievements in all four modes of activity—could the moralist, the philosopher or scientist, the critic of abstract design, the critic of literature and representational art all adopt the same guiding principles of criticism? If not, where do the differences lie? And to come nearer to literary criticism, is our taste in gossip the same kind of thing, or not, as our taste in films and trivial fiction? And is this latter continuous, or not, with our taste in literature? Few of these questions can be answered by yes or no, and an extended examination of them leads one into the area where abstract concepts go over into the concrete details from which they draw whatever life they may have.

D. W. HARDING.

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DIABOLIC INTELLECT AND THE NOBLE HERO:

A NOTE ON *OTHELLO*

OTHELLO, it will be very generally granted, is of all Shakespeare's great tragedies the simplest: the theme is limited and sharply defined, and the play, everyone agrees, is a brilliantly successful piece of workmanship. The effect is one of a noble, 'classical' clarity—of firm, clear outlines, unblurred and undistracted by cloudy recessions, metaphysical aura, or richly symbolical ambiguities.[1] There would, it seems, be something like a consensus in this sense. And yet it is of *Othello* that one can say bluntly, as of no other of the great tragedies, that it suffers in current appreciation an essential and denaturing falsification.

The generally recognized peculiarity of *Othello* among the tragedies may be indicated by saying that it lends itself as no other of them does to the approach classically associated with Bradley's name: even *Othello* (it will be necessary to insist) is poetic drama, a dramatic poem, and not a psychological novel written in dramatic form and draped in poetry, but relevant discussion of its tragic significance will nevertheless be mainly a matter of character-analysis. It would, that is, have lent itself uniquely well to Bradley's approach if Bradley had made his approach consistently and with moderate intelligence. Actually, however, the section on *Othello* in *Shakespearean Tragedy* is more extravagant in misdirected scrupulosity than any of the others; it is, with a concentration of Bradley's comical solemnity, completely wrongheaded—grossly and palpably false to the evidence

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[1] *cf.* 'We seem to be aware in it of a certain limitation, a partial suppression of that element in Shakespeare's mind which unites him with the mystical poets and with the great musicians and philosophers.'—A. C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy*, p. 185.

'*Othello* is a story of intrigue rather than a visionary statement.'—G. Wilson Knight, *The Wheel of Fire*, p. 107.

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it offers to weigh. Grossly and palpably?—yet Bradley's *Othello* is substantially that of common acceptance. And here is the reason for dealing with it, even though not only Bradley but, in its turn, disrespect for Bradley (one gathers) has gone out of fashion (as a matter of fact he is still a very potent and mischievous influence).

According to the version of *Othello* elaborated by Bradley the tragedy is the undoing of the noble Moor by the devilish cunning of Iago. Othello we are to see as a nearly faultless hero whose strength and virtue are turned against him. Othello and Desdemona, so far as their fate depended on their characters and untampered-with mutual relations, had every ground for expecting the happiness that romantic courtship had promised. It was external evil, the malice of the demi-devil, that turned a happy story of romantic love—of romantic lovers who were qualified to live happily ever after, so to speak—into a tragedy. This—it is the traditional version of *Othello* and has, moreover, the support of Coleridge—is to sentimentalize Shakespeare's tragedy and to displace its centre.

Here is Bradley:

> 'Turning from the hero and the heroine to the third principal character we observe (what has often been pointed out) that the action and catastrophe of *Othello* depend largely on intrigue. We must not say more than this. We must not call the play a tragedy of intrigue as distinguished from a tragedy of character.' (p. 179).

—And we must not suppose that Bradley sees what is in front of him. The character he is thinking of isn't Othello's. 'Iago's plot,' he goes on,

> 'Iago's plot is Iago's character in action.'

In fact the play (we need hardly stop short of saying) is Iago's character in action. Bradley adds, it is true, that Iago's plot 'is built on his knowledge of Othello's character, and could not otherwise have succeeded.' But Iago's knowledge of Othello's character amounts pretty much to Bradley's knowledge of it (except, of course, that Iago cannot realize Othello's nobility quite to the full): Othello is purely noble, strong, generous, and trusting, and as tragic hero is, however formidable and destructive in his agonies,

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merely a victim—the victim of Iago's devilish 'intellectual superiority' (which is 'so great that we watch its advance fascinated and appalled'). It is all in order, then, that Iago should get one of the two lectures that Bradley gives to the play, Othello sharing the other with Desdemona. And it is all in the tradition: from Coleridge down, Iago—his motivation or his motivelessness—has commonly been, in commentaries on the play, the main focus of attention.

The plain fact that has to be asserted in the face of this sustained and sanctioned perversity is that in Shakespeare's tragedy of *Othello* Othello is the chief personage—the chief personage in such a sense that the tragedy may fairly be said to be Othello's character in action. Iago is subordinate and merely ancillary. He is not much more than a necessary piece of dramatic mechanism—that at any rate is a fit reply to the view of Othello as necessary material and provocation for a display of Iago's fiendish intellectual superiority. Iago, of course, is sufficiently convincing as a person; he could not perform his dramatic function otherwise. But something has gone wrong when we make him interesting in this kind of way:

> 'His fate—which is himself—has completely mastered him: so that, in the later scenes, where the improbability of the entire success of a design built on so many different falsehoods forces itself on the reader, Iago appears for moments not as a consummate schemer, but as a man absolutely infatuated and delivered over to certain destruction.'

We ought not, in reading those scenes, to be paying so much attention to the intrinsic personal qualities of Iago as to attribute to him tragic interest of that kind.

This last proposition, though its justice is perhaps not self-evident, must remain for the time being a matter of assertion. Other things come first. Othello has in any case the prior claim on our attention, and it seems tactically best to start with something as easy to deal with as the view—Bradley's and Coleridge's[1]

[1] 'Finally, let me repeat that Othello does not kill Desdemona in jealousy, but in a conviction forced upon him by the almost superhuman art of Iago, such a conviction as any man would and must have entertained who had believed Iago's honesty as Othello did.'

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—and of course, Othello's before them—that Othello was 'not easily jealous.' Easy to deal with because there, to point to, is the text, plain and unequivocal. And yet the text was there for Coleridge, and Bradley accompanies his argument with constant particular reference to it. It is as extraordinary a history of triumphant sentimental perversity as literary history can show. Bradley himself saves us the need of insisting on this diagnosis by carrying indulgence of his preconception, his determined sentimental preconception, to such heroic lengths:

> 'Now I repeat that *any* man situated as Othello was would have been disturbed by Iago's communications, and I add that many men would have been made wildly jealous. But up to this point, where Iago is dismissed [III, iii, 238] Othello, I must maintain, does not show jealousy. His confidence is shaken, he is confused and deeply troubled, he feels even horror; but he is not yet jealous in the proper sense of that word.'

The 'proper sense of that word' is perhaps illustrated by these lines (not quoted by Bradley) in which, Bradley grants, 'the beginning of that passion may be traced':

> Haply, for I am black
> And have not those soft parts of conversation
> That chamberers have, or for I am declined
> Into the vale of years—yet that's not much—
> She's gone; I am abused, and my relief
> Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
> That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
> And not their appetites. I had rather be a toad,
> And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
> Than keep a corner in the thing I love
> For others' uses.

Any reader not protected by a very obstinate preconception would take this, not for a new development of feeling, but for the fully explicit expression of something he had already, pages back, registered as an essential element in Othello's behaviour—something the evoking of which was essential to Iago's success. In any case, jealous or not jealous 'in the proper sense of that word,' Othello has from the beginning responded to Iago's

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' communications ' in the way Iago desired and with a promptness that couldn't be improved upon, and has dismissed Iago with these words:

> Farewell, farewell:
> If more thou dost perceive, let me know more;
> Set on thy wife to observe

—to observe Desdemona, concerning whom Iago has just said:

> Ay, there's the point: as—to be bold with you—
> Not to affect many proposed matches
> Of her own clime, complexion and degree,
> Whereto we see in all things nature tends—
> Foh! one may smell in such a will most rank,
> Foul disproportion, thoughts unnatural.
> But pardon me: I do not in position
> Distinctly speak of her, though I may fear
> Her will, recoiling to her better judgment,
> May fall to match you with her country forms,
> And happily repent.

To say that it's not jealousy here is hardly (one would have thought) to bring Othello off clean; but Bradley's conclusion is not (as might have seemed inevitable) that there may be other faults than jealousy that are at least as damaging to a man in the character of husband and married lover. He is quite explicit:

> ' Up to this point, it seems to me, there is not a syllable to be said against Othello.' (p. 194).

With such resolute fidelity does Bradley wear these blinkers that he can say,

> ' His trust, where he trusts, is absolute,'

without realizing the force of the corollary: Othello's trust, then, can never have been in Desdemona. It is the vindication of Othello's perfect nobility that Bradley is preoccupied with, and we are to see the immediate surrender to Iago as part of that nobility. But to make absolute trust in Iago—trust at Desdemona's expense —a manifestation of perfect nobility is (even if we ignore what it makes of Desdemona) to make Iago a very remarkable person indeed. And that Bradley, tradition aiding and abetting, proceeds to do.

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However, to anyone not wearing these blinkers it is plain that no subtilization and exaltation of the Iago-devil (with consequent subordination of Othello) can save the noble hero of Bradley's devotion. And it is plain that what we should see in Iago's prompt success is not so much Iago's diabolic intellect as Othello's readiness to respond. Iago's power, in fact, in the temptation-scene is that he represents something that is in Othello—in Othello the husband of Desdemona: the essential traitor is within the gates. For if Shakespeare's Othello too is simple-minded, he is nevertheless more complex than Bradley's. Bradley's Othello is, rather, Othello's; it being an essential datum regarding the Shakespearean Othello that he has an ideal conception of himself.

The tragedy is inherent in the Othello-Desdemona relation, and Iago is a mechanism necessary for precipitating tragedy in a dramatic action. Explaining how it should be that Othello, who is so noble and trustful ('Othello, we have seen, was trustful, and thorough in his trust'), can so immediately doubt his wife, Bradley says:

> 'But he was newly married; in the circumstances he cannot have known much of Desdemona before his marriage.' (p. 192).

Again we read:

> 'But it is not surprising that his utter powerlessness to repel it [Iago's insinuation] on the ground of knowledge of his wife . . . should complete his misery . . .' (p. 193).

Bradley, that is, in his comically innocent way, takes it as part of the datum that Othello really knows nothing about his wife. Ah, but he was in love with her. And so poetically. 'For,' says Bradley, 'there is no love, not that of Romeo in his youth, more steeped in imagination than Othello's.' Othello, however, we are obliged to remark (Bradley doesn't make the point in this connection) is not in his youth; he is represented as middle-aged—as having attained at any rate to maturity in that sense. There might seem to be dangers in such a situation, quite apart from any intervention by an Iago. But then, we are told, Othello is 'of a great openness and trustfulness of nature.'—It would be putting it more to the point to say that he has great consciousness of worth and confidence of respect.

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The worth is really and solidly there ; he is truly impressive, a noble product of the life of action—of

> The big wars
> That make ambition virtue.

' That make ambition virtue '—this phrase of his is a key one: his virtues are, in general, of that kind ; they have, characteristically, something of the quality suggested. Othello, in his magnanimous way, is egotistic. He really is, beyond any question, the nobly massive man of action, the captain of men, he sees himself as being, but he does very much see himself:

> Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them.

In short, a habit of approving self-dramatization is an essential element in Othello's make-up, and remains so at the very end.

It is, at the best, the impressive manifestation of a noble egotism. But, in the new marital situation, this egotism isn't going to be the less dangerous for its nobility. This self-centredness doesn't mean self-knowledge: that is a virtue which Othello, as soldier of fortune, hasn't had much need of. He has been well provided by nature to meet all the trials a life of action has exposed him to. The trials facing him now that he has married this Venetian girl with whom he's ' in love ' so imaginatively (we're told) as to outdo Romeo and who is so many years younger than himself (his colour, whether or not ' colour-feeling ' existed among the Elizabethans, we are certainly to take as emphasizing the disparity of the match)—the trials facing him now are of a different order.

And here we have the significance of the storm, which puts so great a distance between Venice and Cyprus, between the old life and the new, and makes the change seem so complete and so momentous. The storm is rendered in that characteristic heroic mode of the play which Professor Wilson Knight[1] calls the ' Othello music ' :

> For do but stand upon the foaming shore,
> The chidden billows seem to chide the clouds ;

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[1]See that valuable book, *The Wheel of Fire*, of which the Oxford University Press has brought out a new edition at 6s.

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> The wind-shaked surge, with high and monstrous mane,
> Seems to cast water on the burning bear,
> And quench the guards of the ever-fixed pole:
> I never did like molestation view
> On the enchafed flood. [II, i]

This mode (Professor Wilson Knight, in his own way, describes it well) gives the effect of a comparatively simple magnificence; the characteristic verse of *Othello* is firm, regular in outline, buoyant and sonorous. It is in an important sense Othello's own verse, the 'large-mouthed utterance' of the noble man of action. Bradley's way of putting it is that Othello, though he 'has not, indeed, the meditative or speculative imagination of Hamlet,' is 'in the strictest sense of the word' 'more poetic than Hamlet' (p. 188). We need not ask Bradley what the 'strictest sense of the word' is, or stop to dispute with him whether or not Othello is 'the greatest poet' of all Shakespeare's heroes. If characters in poetic drama speak poetry we ought to be able to notice the fact without concluding that they are poets. In *Othello*, which is poetic drama, Shakespeare works by poetic means: it is through the characteristic noble verse described above that, very largely, we get our sense of the noble Othello. If the impression made by Othello's own utterance is often poetical as well as poetic, that is Shakespeare's way, not of representing him as a poet, but of conveying the romantic glamour that, for Othello himself and others, invests Othello and what he stands for.

For Othello himself—it might be said that to express Othello's sense of himself and make us share it is the essential function of this verse, the 'Othello music.' But, of course, there are distinctions to be noted. The description of the storm quoted above, though it belongs to the general heroic mode of the play, cannot be said to exhibit the element of self-dramatization that is characteristic of Othello's own utterances. On the other hand, the self-dramatizing trick commands subtle modulations and various stops. It is not always as assertive as in

> Behold, I have a weapon, [V, ii, 257]

or the closing speech. In these speeches, not only is it explicit, it clearly involves, we may note, an attitude *towards* the emotion

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expressed—an attitude of a kind we are familiar with in the analysis of sentimentality.

The storm, within the idealizing mode, is at the other extreme from sentimentality ; it serves to bring out the reality of the heroic Othello and what he represents. For his heroic quality, realized in this verse (here the utterance of others) is a real thing, though it is not, as Othello takes it to be, the whole of the reality. Another way of making the point would be to say that the distinctive style under discussion, the style that lends itself to Othello's self-dramatization and conveys in general the tone and ideal import of this, goes, in its confident and magnificent buoyancy, essentially with the outer storm that both the lovers, in their voyage to Cyprus, triumphantly outride.

With that kind of external stress the noble Othello is well-qualified to deal (if he went down—and we know he won't—he would go down magnificently). But it is not that kind of stress he has to fear in the new life beginning at Cyprus. The stresses of the spiritual climate are concentrated by Iago (with his deflating, unbeglamouring, brutally realistic mode of speech) into something immediately apprehensible in drama and comparable with the storm. In this testing Othello's inner timbers begin to part at once, the stuff of which he is made begins at once to deteriorate and show itself unfit. There is even a symbolic foundering when, breaking into incoherent ejaculations, he ' falls in a trance.' [IV, i, 35].

As for the justice of this view that Othello yields with extraordinary promptness to suggestion, with such promptness as to make it plain that the mind that undoes him is not Iago's but his own, it does not seem to need arguing. If it has to be argued, the only difficulty is the difficulty, for written criticism, of going in detailed commentary through an extended text. The text is plain enough. Iago's sustained attack begins at about line 90 in Act III, Sc. iii, immediately upon Desdemona's exit and Othello's exclamation:

> Excellent wretch! Perdition catch my soul,
> But I do love thee! and when I love thee not,
> Chaos is come again.

In seventy lines Othello is brought to such a state that Iago can, without getting any reply but

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O misery,

say

O, beware, my lord, of jealousy, [167]

and use the word 'cuckold.' In ninety lines Othello is saying

Why did I marry?

The explanation of this quick work is given plainly enough here:

Iago. I would not have your free and noble nature [200]
Out of self-bounty be abused; look to't:
I know our country disposition well;
In Venice they do let heaven see the pranks
They dare not show their husbands; their best conscience
Is not to leave't undone, but keep't unknown.

Othello. Dost thou say so?

Iago. She did deceive her father, marrying you;
And when she seem'd to shake and fear your looks,
She loved them most.

Othello. And so she did.

There in the first two lines is, explicitly appealed to by Iago,[1] Othello's ideal conception of himself: it would be a pity if he let it be his undoing (as it actually was—the full irony Iago can hardly be credited with intending). And there, in the last line, we have the noble and magnanimous Othello, romantic hero and married lover, accepting as evidence against his wife the fact that, at the willing sacrifice of everything else, she had made with him a marriage of romantic love. Iago, like Bradley, points out that Othello didn't really know Desdemona, and Othello acquiesces in considering her as a type—a type outside his experience—the Venetian wife. It is plain, then, that his love is composed very largely of ignorance of self as well as ignorance of her: however nobly he may feel about it, it isn't altogether what he, and Bradley with him, thinks it is. It may be love, but it can be only in an

[1]Who has described Othello [I, i, 12] as 'loving his own pride and purposes.'

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oddly qualified sense love of her: it must be much more a matter of self-centred and self-regarding satisfactions—pride, sensual possessiveness, appetite, love of loving—than he suspects.

This comes out unmistakably when he begins to let himself go ; for instance, in the soliloquy that follows Iago's exit:

> She's gone ; I am abused, and my relief
> Must be to loathe her. O curse of marriage,
> That we can call these delicate creatures ours,
> And not their appetites! I had rather be a toad,
> And live upon the vapour of a dungeon,
> Than keep a corner in the thing I love
> For others' uses.

Even the actual presence of Desdemona, who enters immediately upon the close of this soliloquy, can avail nothing against the misgivings of angry egotism. Pointing to his forehead he makes an allusion to the cuckold's horns, and when she in her innocence misunderstands him and offers to soothe the pain he rebuffs her. The element of angry sensuality is insistent:

> What sense had I of her stol'n hours of lust? [329]
> . . . . . .
> I had been happy if the general camp,
> Prisoners and all, had tasted her sweet body.

It is significant that, at the climax of the play, when Othello, having exclaimed

> O blood, blood, blood,

kneels to take a formal vow of revenge, he does so in the heroic strain of the ' Othello music.' To Iago's

> Patience, I say ; your mind perhaps may change,

he replies:

> Never Iago. Like to the Pontic sea,
> Whose icy current and compulsive course
> Ne'er feels retiring ebb, but keeps due on
> To the Propontic and the Hellespont ;
> Even so my bloody thoughts, with violent pace,
> Shall ne'er look back, ne'er ebb to humble love,

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> Till that a wide and capable revenge
> Swallow them up. Now, by yond marble heaven,
> In the due reverence of a sacred vow
> I here engage my words.

At this climax of the play, as he sets himself irrevocably in his vindictive resolution, he reassumes formally his heroic self-dramatization—reassumes the Othello of ' the big wars that make ambition virtue.' The part of this conscious nobility, this noble egotism, this self-pride that was justified by experience irrelevant to the present trials and stresses, is thus underlined. Othello's self-idealization, his promptness to jealousy and his blindness are shown in their essential relation. The self-idealization is shown as blindness and the nobility as here no longer something real, but the disguise of an obtuse and brutal egotism. Self-pride becomes stupidity, ferocious stupidity, an insane and self-deceiving passion. The habitual ' nobility ' is seen to make self-deception invincible, the egotism it expresses being the drive to catastrophe. Othello's noble lack of self-knowledge is shown as humiliating and disastrous.

Bradley, however, his knowledge of Othello coinciding virtually with Othello's, sees nothing but the nobility. At the cost of denaturing Shakespeare's tragedy, he insistently idealizes. The ' feelings of jealousy proper ' he says (p. 194)

> ' are not the chief or deepest source of Othello's suffering. It is the feeling,
>
> If she be false, oh then Heaven mocks itself ;
>
> the feeling,
>
> O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!'

—It is Shakespeare's tragedy of Othello that the man who exclaims this can exclaim three lines later, when he next speaks (IV, i, 204):

> I will chop her into messes. Cuckold me!

Again, three lines further on he says:

> Get me some poison, Iago ; this night. I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again: this night, Iago.

This surely has some bearing on the nature of ' the pity of it ': to equate Bradley's knowledge of Othello with Othello's own was perhaps unfair to Othello.

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In any case, this association of strong sensuality with ugly vindictive jealousy is insistent in Shakespeare's play:

> Now he tells how she plucked him to my chamber. O, I see that nose of yours, but not that dog I shall throw it to. [IV, i, 140]
>
> I would have him nine years a-killing. A fine woman! a fair woman! a sweet woman! [IV, i, 181]

—'O Iago, the pity of it, Iago!': it is plain here that 'fine,' 'fair' and 'sweet' apply, not to Desdemona as a complete person (the immediate provocation is Iago's remark, 'she gave it him and he hath given it [the handkerchief] his whore'), but to her person in abstraction from the character of the owner, whom Othello hardly, at this point, respects. And the nature of this regret, this tragically expressed regret, bears an essential relation to the nature of the love with which Othello, however imaginatively and Romeo-like, loved Desdemona. That romantic idealizing love could be as dubiously grounded in reality as this is an essential condition of the tragedy. But Bradley's own idealizing is invincible. He can even say (p. 197):

> An ineradicable instinct of justice, rather than any last quiver of hope, leads him to question Emilia.'

That's no doubt how Othello would have put it; but for the reader—the unidealizing reader—what the questioning of Emilia (IV, ii) shows in brutal, resolute, unrestricted predominance is the antithesis of any instinct of justice.

With obtuseness to the tragic significance of Shakespeare's play goes insensibility to his poetry—to his supreme art as exhibited locally in the verse (it is still not superfluous to insist that the poetic skill is one with the dramatic). This is Bradley's commentary on Act V, Sc. ii:

> 'The supposed death of Cassio (V, i) satiates the thirst for vengeance. The Othello who enters the bed-chamber with the words,
>
> It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul,
>
> is not the man of the Fourth Act. The deed he is bound to do

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is no murder, but a sacrifice. He is to save Desdemona from herself, not in hate but in honour ; in honour, and also in love. His anger has passed ; a boundless sorrow has taken its place ; and

> this sorrow's heavenly:
> It strikes where it doth love.

Even when, at the sight of her apparent obduracy, and at the hearing of words which by a crowning fatality can only reconvince him of her guilt, these feelings give way to others, it is to righteous indignation they give way, not to rage: and, terribly painful as this scene is, there is almost nothing here to diminish the admiration and love which heighten pity.' (p. 197).

—That again, no doubt, is how Othello (though as for satiated thirst, he says at line 74,

> Had all his hairs been lives, my great revenge
> Had stomach for them all)

would like to see it. But Bradley, in the speech he quotes from, misses all the shifts of tone by which Shakespeare renders the shifting confusion of Othello's mind. For it is a speech one might have chosen with the express view of illustrating that subtle command of tone which marks Shakespeare's mature art, and which makes the poetry of *Othello* so different in kind from that of *Romeo and Juliet*, and the two dramas consequently incomparable.

It opens with the accent of a contained holy revulsion, the containing power appearing as inexorable, impersonal justice:

> It is the cause, it is the cause, my soul!
> Let me not name it to you, you chaste stars!
> It is the cause.

Now comes a shrinking back from the deed:

> Yet I'll not shed her blood,
> Nor scar that whiter skin of hers than snow
> And smooth as monumental alabaster.

Tenderness here quite clearly is that characteristic voluptuousness of Othello's which, since it is unassociated with any real interest

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in Desdemona as a person, slips so readily into possessive jealousy. Now the accent of impersonal justice is heard again—

> Yet she must die, else she'll betray more men

—but the accent is so clearly unrelated to any effectual motive in Othello that the concern for justice, the self-bracing to noble sacrifice, appears as self-deception. Next comes misgiving over the finality of the deed:

> Put out the light, and then put out the light:
> If I quench thee, thou flaming minister,
> I can again thy former light restore,
> Should I repent me: but once put out thy light,
> Thou cunning'st pattern of excelling nature,
> I know not where is that Promethean heat
> That can thy light relume. When I have pluck'd the rose
> I cannot give it vital growth again,
> It must needs wither: I'll smell it on the tree.

Tenderness here is less specifically voluptuous sensuality than it was earlier, but we nevertheless remember:

> Get me some poison, Iago ; this night. I'll not expostulate with her, lest her body and beauty unprovide my mind again: this night, Iago. [IV, i, 208].

And there is in Othello a curious and characteristic effect of self-preoccupation, of preoccupation with his emotions rather than with Desdemona in her own right:

> O balmy breath, that almost dost persuade
> Justice to break her sword! One more, one more:
> Be thus when thou art dead, and I will kill thee,
> And love thee after: one more, and this the last:
> So sweet was ne'er so fatal. I must weep,
> But they are cruel tears: this sorrow's heavenly ;
> It strikes where it doth love. She wakes.

When she is awake and so is no longer a mere body, but a person, it is not sorrowful love or noble self-bracing to a sacrifice that she becomes aware of in Othello:

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Alas, why gnaw you so your nether lip? [43]
Some bloody passion shakes your very frame:
These are portents.

Moreover, though Othello says

I would not kill thy unprepared spirit,

actually he refuses her the time to say one prayer.

When he discovers his mistake, his reaction is an intolerably intensified form of the common 'I could kick myself':

Whip me, ye devils
From the possession of this heavenly sight!
Blow me about in winds! roast me in sulphur!
Wash me in steep-down gulfs of liquid fire!
O Desdemona! Desdemona! dead!
Oh! Oh! Oh!

But he remains the same Othello; he has discovered his mistake, but there is no tragic self-discovery. The speech closing with the lines just quoted is that beginning

Behold, I have a weapon,

one of the finest examples in the play of the self-dramatizing trick. The noble Othello is now seen as tragically pathetic, and he sees himself as pathetic too:

Man but a rush against Othello's breast,
And he retires. Where shall Othello go?

He is ruined, but he is the same Othello in whose essential make-up the tragedy lay: the tragedy doesn't involve the idea of the hero's learning through suffering. The fact that Othello tends to sentimentalize should be the reverse of a reason for our sentimentalizing too.

For even, or rather especially, in that magnificent last speech of his Othello does tend to sentimentalize,[1] though to say that and no more would convey a false impression, for the speech conveys

[1]There is, I find, an admirable note on this speech in Mr. T. S. Eliot's essay, *Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca.*

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something like the full complexity of Othello's simple nature, and in the total effect the simplicity is tragic and grand. The quiet beginning gives us the man of action with his habit of effortless authority:

> Soft you ; a word or two before you go.
> I have done the State some service, and they know't.
> No more of that. I pray you in your letters,
> When you shall these unlucky deeds relate,
> Speak of me as I am ; nothing extenuate,
> Nor set down aught in malice . . .

Othello really is, we cannot doubt, the stoic-captain whose few words know their full sufficiency: up to this point we cannot say he dramatizes himself, he simply *is*. But then, in a marvellous way (if we consider Shakespeare's art), the emotion works itself up until in less than half-a-dozen lines the stoic of few words is eloquently weeping. With

> then must you speak
> Of one that loved not wisely but too well,

the epigrammatic terseness of the dispatch, the dictated dispatch, begins to quiver. Then, with a rising emotional swell, description becomes unmistakably self-dramatization—self-dramatization as un-self-comprehending as before:

> Of one not easily jealous, but being wrought,
> Perplex'd in the extreme ; of one whose hand,
> Like the base Indian, threw a pearl away
> Richer than all his tribe ; of one whose subdued eyes,
> Albeit unused to the melting mood,
> Drop tears as fast as the Arabian trees
> Their medicinal gum.

—Contemplating the spectacle of himself, Othello is overcome with the pathos of it. But this is not the part to die in: drawing himself proudly up, he speaks his last words as the stern fighting man who has done the state some service:

> Set you down this ;
> And say besides, that in Aleppo once,

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> Where a malignant and a turban'd Turk
> Beat a Venetian and traduced the state,
> I took by the throat the circumcised dog
> And smote him, thus. [stabs himself].

It is a superb *coup de théâtre*.

As, with that double force, a *coup de théâtre*, it is a peculiarly right ending to the tragedy of Othello. The theme of the tragedy is concentrated in it—concentrated in the final speech and action as it could not have been had Othello 'learnt through suffering.' That he should die acting his ideal part is all in the part: the part is manifested here in its rightness and solidity, and the actor as inseparably the man of action. The final blow is as real as the blow it re-enacts, and the histrionic intent symbolically affirms the reality: Othello dies belonging to the world of action in which his true part lay.

That so many readers—Coleridge, Swinburne, Bradley, for instance—not belonging to that world should have found Othello's part irresistibly attractive, in the sense that they have preferred to see the play through Othello's eyes rather than Shakespeare's, is perhaps not after all surprising. It may be suggested that the cult of T. E. Lawrence has some relevance here. And Othello is not merely a glamorous man of action who dominates all companies, he is (as we have all been) cruelly and tragically wronged—a victim of relentless intrigue, and, while remaining noble and heroic, is allowed to appreciate the pathos of his own fate. He has, in fact, all the advantages of that last speech, where the invitation to identify oneself with him is indeed hardly resistible. Who does not (in some moments) readily see himself as the hero of such a *coup de théâtre*?

The exaltation of Iago, it has already been suggested, is a corollary of this response to Othello. What but supremely subtle villainy could have brought to this kind of ruin the hero whose perfect nobility we admire and love? Bradley concludes that

> 'to compare Iago with the Satan of *Paradise Lost* seems almost absurd, so immensely does Shakespeare's man exceed Milton's fiend in evil.' (p. 206).

However, to be fair to Bradley, we must add that he also finds

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Iago decidedly less great than Napoleon.[1] Nevertheless, even if Iago hasn't 'intellectual supremacy,' we are to credit him with vast 'intellectual superiority': 'in intellect . . . and in will . . . Iago *is* great.' (p. 219). If we ask the believers in Iago's intellect where they find it, they can hardly point to anything immediately present in the text, though it is true that he makes some acute and cynical observations at times. The evidence of his intellect is the success of his plot: if he hadn't had an extraordinary intellect, how could he have succeeded? That is the essential argument. It is an odd kind of literary criticism. 'The skill of Iago was extraordinary,' says Bradley, 'but,' he adds, with characteristic scrupulousness. 'so was his good fortune.'

Yes, so was his good fortune—until Shakespeare gave him bad. That it should be possible to argue so solemnly and pertinaciously on the assumption that Iago, his intellect and his good fortune belong, like Napoleon and his, to history, may be taken as showing that Shakespeare succeeded in making him plausible enough for the purposes of the drama. And yet even Bradley betrays certain misgivings. Noting the astonishing (when one thinks of it) contrast between the devilish reality of Iago and the impression he makes on everyone (including his wife)[2] except Roderigo, Bradley comments (p. 217):

> 'What further conclusions can be drawn from it? Obviously, to begin with, the inference, which is accompanied by a thrill of admiration, that Iago's powers of dissimulation and of self-control must have been prodigious . . . '

—There we have the process by which the prodigious Iago is

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[1] 'But compare him with one who may perhaps be roughly called a bad man of supreme intellectual power, Napoleon, and you see how mean and negative Iago's mind is, incapable of his military achievements, much more incapable of his political constructions.' p. 236.

[2] 'And it is a fact too little noticed that he presented an appearance not very different to his wife. There is no sign either that Emilia's marriage was downright unhappy, or that she suspected the true nature of her husband.'

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created. But the scrupulous Bradley nevertheless records the passing doubt:

> 'In fact so prodigious does his self-control appear that a reader might be excused for feeling a doubt of its possibility.'

Of course, it is recorded only to be overcome:

> 'But there are certain observations and further inferences which apart from a confidence in Shakespeare, would remove this doubt.'

Actually, if we are to be saved from these doubts (those of us who are not strengthened by this confidence in Shakespeare), we must refrain from careful observations, comparative notes and scrupulous inferences. Shakespeare's genius carries with it a large facility in imposing conviction locally, and before we ask for more than this we should make sure we know just what is being offered us in the whole. The title of *Othello*, borne out by the dominating quality of the hero, tells us where we are to focus. As for Iago, we know from the beginning that he is a villain ; the business of Roderigo tells us that. In the other scenes we have no difficulty in taking him as we are meant to take him ; and we don't (at any rate in the reading, and otherwise it's the actor's problem) ask how it is that appearance and reality can have been so successfully divorced. Considered as a comprehensibly villainous person, he represents a not uncommon kind of grudging, cynical malice (and he's given, at least in suggestion, enough in the way of grievance and motive). But in order to perform his function as dramatic machinery he has to put on such an appearance of invincibly cunning devilry as to provide Coleridge and the rest with some excuse for their awe, and to leave others wondering, in critical reflection, whether he isn't a rather clumsy mechanism. Perhaps the most serious point to be pondered is that, if Othello is to retain our sympathy sufficiently, Iago must, as devil, claim for himself an implicit weight of emotional regard that critical reflection finds him unfit to carry.

'Clumsy,' however, is not the right word for anything in *Othello*. It is a marvellously sure and adroit piece of workmanship ; though closely related to that judgment is the further one

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that, with all its brilliance and poignancy, it comes below Shakespeare's supreme—his very greatest—works.

* * * *

I refrained, of set purpose, from reading Professor Stoll on *Othello* and its critics till I had written, as Bradley precipitated it, my own account of the play. Professor Stoll is of course known as, in academic Shakespeare criticism, the adversary of the Bradley approach, and now that I have read what he has to say[1] about *Othello* he seems to me to confirm where the critical centre lies by deviating as badly on his side as Bradley does on the other.

Professor Stoll, having first justified with a weight of scholarship my unscholarly assumption that the view of *Othello* represented by Bradley has, since Coleridge's time, been the generally accepted one, exposes unanswerably and at length the absurdity of that view. His own positive account of the play, however, is no less indefensible than Bradley's. He argues that Othello's lapse into jealousy is to be explained in terms, not of Othello's psychology, but of convention. Profiting by the convention of ' the slanderer believed ' (for the use of which Professor Stoll gives a long string of instances) Shakespeare simply imposes jealousy on Othello from the outside: that is Professor Stoll's position.

As we contemplate his string of instances we are moved to insist on certain distinctions the importance of which seems to have passed him by. When Shakespeare uses the ' same ' convention as Beaumont and Fletcher, Dryden and Voltaire, his use is apt to be such that only by a feat of abstraction can the convention be said to be the same. Who will bother to argue whether jealousy in Beaumont and Fletcher or any of the others is psychologically defensible or not? The unique power by which Shakespeare compels ' faith in the emotions expressed ' and beguiles Bradley and company into their absurdities is, of course,

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[1]In *Othello : An Historical and Comparative Study* (*Studies in Language and Literature, No. 2.* University of Minnesota, 1915) and *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare* (1933). Professor Stoll's position appears not to have changed between the two essays, but I find his less developed style the more intelligible. The later book was reviewed in *Scrutiny* for June, 1934.

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recognized by Professor Stoll, though he cannot recognize with any sureness its nature:

> ' By the sheer potency of art Othello, Iago, Desdemona, and Emilia maintain, through all their incredible vicissitudes, their individual tone. And inconsistent, unpsychological though they be, their passions speak ever true.'[1]

To explain this potency, Professor Stoll, urging us to be content with ' mere art,' talks vaguely of ' tact,' ' delicacy ' and ' poetry,' makes play with analogies from music, and quotes Shaw's ' it is the score and not the libretto that keeps the work alive and fresh.' Elsewhere he can recognize that ' No one has more imaginative sympathy than Shakespeare ; but,' he goes on,

> ' he employs it by fits and starts, often neglects motivation and analysis, takes a leap as he passes from one " soul-state " to another, and not content with the inconsistencies of life, falls into the contradictions of convention and artifice.'[2]

This is better than talking about ' score ' and ' libretto,' though a critic who saw that and understood would make distinctions and discriminations that Professor Stoll ignores. The ' sheer potency ' of Shakespeare's art, the ' magic ' of his ' score ' (and where is the ' libretto '?) derives from his imaginative grasp of concrete human situations in their complexity and particularity ; his power of realizing a vivid here-and-now of experience as part of an intricate and coherent context. The convincing life of the verse locally and the more inclusive realizing grasp belong together ; the one is the index of the other.

There are, no doubt, places in Shakespeare of which one may argue that local vividnesses here and here, convincingly living parts, are not related in an inwardly grasped whole, and that Shakespeare has fallen ' into the contradictions of convention and artifice.' That would be an adverse criticism. But before we make it we must make sure what kind of whole Shakespeare is offering us. For instance, it is not intelligent criticism of *Measure*

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[1] *Othello : An Historical and Comparative Study*, p. 62.
[2] p. 69, *op. cit.*

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for Measure to say, as a dramatic critic did recently in *The New Statesman and Nation* (Oct. 16th, 1937):

> 'The author seems to have lost interest in it about half-way through, and turns a fine story to nonsense. (The Duke's character, if one could take it seriously, would be as curious and complicated as any in Shakespeare—a moralist who tortures people in order to study their behaviour on the rack).'

—To 'take seriously' means, it is clear, to regard Shakespeare's Duke as a historical person and judge him by the standards one would apply in actual life. But, for anyone who can read, Shakespeare provides intimation enough that the Duke isn't to be taken in that way—that he moves on a different plane from the other characters. And because of the obviously serious purpose it subserves and the impressiveness of the total effect it makes possible we readily accept the convention involved in taking the Duke as we are meant to take him.

But with Othello it is different. By the time he becomes the jealous husband it has been made plain beyond any possibility of doubt or reversal that we are to take him, in the dramatic critic's sense, seriously—at any rate, such a habit of expectation has been set up with regard to him (and he is well established as the main focus of attention) that no development will be acceptable unless the behaviour it imposes on him is reconcilable with our notions of ordinary psychological consistency. Other characters in the play can be 'convincing' on easier terms; we needn't inquire into the consistency of Emilia's behaviour—we accept her as a datum, and not even about Iago are we—or need we be—so psychologically exacting. His combination of honest seeming with devilish actuality we accept as, at least partly, a matter of tacit convention; convention acceptable because of the convincingly handled tragic theme to which it is ancillary.

And the tragic theme is centred in Othello. Dramatic sleight is not cheating so long as it subserves honesty there. We do not, even when we consider it critically, quarrel with the trick of 'double time,' though it involves impossibilities by the criteria of actual life and yet is at the same time necessary to the plausible conduct of the intrigue; but equivalent tricks or illusions passing off on us mutually incompatible acceptances with regard to

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Othello's behaviour or make-up *would* be cheating—that is, matter for critical condemnation. To impose by convention sudden jealousy on Leontes in *The Winter's Tale* and Posthumus in *Cymbeline* is one thing: we admit the convention for the sake of an inclusive effect—a dramatic design that does not, we recognize (wherever in the scale of Shakespeare's work we may place these plays), anywhere ask us to endorse dramatic illusion with the feeling of everyday reality. But to impose jealousy by mere convention on Othello is another thing. What end would be served? What profit would accrue?

According to Professor Stoll, the profit of 'putting jealousy upon the hero instead of breeding it in him' is an 'enormous emotional effect':

> 'The end—the enormous emotional effect—justifies the means . . .'[1]

This emotional effect, as Professor Stoll enjoys it, he represents as the product of our being enabled, by Shakespeare's art, to have it both ways: Othello succumbing to jealousy before our eyes acquires an intense dramatic value without incurring in our esteem the disadvantages attendant upon being jealous; there he is, patently jealous, yet he is at the same time still the man who couldn't possibly have become jealous like that.

> 'The villain, by all this contriving of the poet's, bears in this instance, like the ancient Fate or intruding god, the burden of responsibility; and our sympathy with a hero made of no such baseness is almost wholly without alloy.'[2]

—Professor Stoll, that is, in spite of the difference of his analysis, sees the play as the triumph of sentimentalization that it has appeared to so many admirers:

> '. . . no one in Shakespeare's tragedies more bitterly and wildly reproaches himself . . . Yet not of himself suspicious or sensual, he is now not corrupted or degraded; and amid his misery and remorse he can still hold up his head and declare:
>
> For nought I did in hate, but all in honour.

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[1] *Art and Artifice in Shakespeare*, p. 41. [2] *Op. cit.*, p. 42.

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not easily jealous, but, being wrought,
Perplex'd in the extreme.

He is a more effective tragic figure because he can say that—because, unlike many, he keeps our sympathy and admiration to the end.'[1]

—The ' emotional effect ' of the tragedy upon Professor Stoll is essentially that celebrated in his own way by Bradley, and Professor Stoll's analysis, in fact, does explain in large measure why such a tragedy should be so widely found in *Othello* and found irresistible.

Fortunately we are not reduced to reversing the critical judgment and censuring Shakespeare. The dilemma that Professor Stoll and Bradley resolve in their different but equally heroic ways—the dilemma represented by a ' not easily jealous ' Othello who succumbs at once to Iago's suggestions—needn't be allowed to bother us. Both critics seem to think that, if Othello hasn't exhibited himself in the past as prone to sexual jealousy (and his reputation tells us he hasn't), that establishes him as ' not easily jealous,' so that his plunge into jealousy would, if we had to justify it psychologically (Bradley, of course, prefers not to recognize it), pose us an insoluble problem. Yet surely, as Shakespeare presents him, it is not so very elusive a datum about Othello, or one that ordinary experience of life and men makes it difficult to accept, that his past history hasn't been such as to test his proneness to sexual jealousy—has, in fact, thereby been such as to increase his potentialities in just that respect.

However, he is likely to remain for many admirers the entirely noble hero, object of a sympathy poignant and complete as he succumbs to the machinations of diabolic intellect.

F. R. Leavis.

[1] *Op. cit.*, p. 43.

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JEAN WIÉNER AND MUSIC FOR ENTERTAINMENT

Un homme enfin
Pour être humain
Doit prendr' pour épitaphe ;
J'ai ris jusqu' à la fin.

(Popular song, to a tune by Wiéner).

I.

IF one speaks of ' popular ' music one means, I suppose, any music which is composed to fulfil a social function, written in the first place without regard to its æsthetic value but rather as entertainment. But it is important to remember that what we now know as popular music is something of comparatively recent invention, and that only since about the beginning of the nineteenth century has there existed a sort of entertainment music which is recognized as being different from, *and even opposed to*, the ' serious ' music which is being composed contemporaneously. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (to confine ourselves to more or less familiar European music), there was no uneasy borderline between ' serious ' music and music written for popular entertainment or for occasional purposes, because music was then an ' activity of the people ' ; there was no class of popular composers fulfilling a different function from the serious composers, for the music of professional musicians was popular at the same time. Purcell, or Handel, or Matthew Locke, did not look upon the music they wrote for the theatre or for royal exhibitions of pyrotechnics as being less ' serious ' than the music they wrote for the Church—though it may possibly have been less solemn. Now, when the serious composer is becoming more and more remote from the general public and an ever increasing amount of

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bad music is being listened to through the means of mechanical reproduction, a problem arises where no problem used to be. Either the emotional and intellectual vitality of the ' mass ' of the people will continue to be lowered through incessant submission to inferior art, or some sort of substitute has to be found for the wholesale commercial exploitation of sound. Such a substitute would, it seems to me, inevitably be a very specialized product and probably only of negative value ; yet it is not without significance that Erik Satie, one of the most acute musical minds of our time, should have concerned himself so scrupulously with this very question.

' Light ' music, music as entertainment, first appeared as something existing in its own right round about the middle of the nineteenth century, and the first ' school ' of light music was that of the Parisian composers of comic opera which arose at this time. It is a truism that an intimate relation between composer and people can only exist in comparatively small social orders—that Mozart's music was ' universal ' because his notorious ' urbanity ' implied a civilization that was very much more than urban, something in the same way as Pope had a ripe inheritance behind his politeness. But in the latter part of the nineteenth century we find that the great composers, like Berlioz and perhaps Liszt, tend to become exotic products, while the majority of the lesser composers tend to become either self-consciously rural (*n.b.* the Russian ' discovery ' of folk-music) or else uncompromisingly urban (in the limited sense). French light music, the first form of popular music as we understand the term, was the product of such an urbanism. This urbanism was, of course, essentially an artificial culture, ' social ' with the modern implications of the phrase, and thus for the better part capable of providing a basis only for art as entertainment. (It is no accident that Satie, though he benefited by having this sort of society behind him, regarded it ironically and critically since it offered a solidarity too crude and simple for him to share). But at the same time it must be realized that this Parisian society had a certain strength. It may have been superficial, but the Paris of Toulouse-Lautrec, with its almost legendary harlots and silk-hatted *bonhomie*, did represent, in its stimulated intoxicated way, a manner of life. It produced, after all, in Offenbach and Bizet, composers of light music of a sincerity and

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vivacity that is still unrivalled ;[1] it produced, in Reynaldo Hahn, an exquisite musician of a class—the drawing-room composer—which is now extinct ; and it produced, in Emmanuel Chabrier, one composer of indubitable genius, a composer who refined the very qualities which made Paris of his day the home of an entertainment music of such unparalleled *entrain*, into an essentially humorous and unexpectedly profound mode of apprehending life ; the creator of this healthy music of physical movement is thus probably the last composer to be at once ' light ' and ' serious ' without any suspicion of self-consciousness or artificiality.

I suppose the music of Jean Wiéner already looks somewhat dated—as does that of all the post-war Parisians. I suppose, intrinsically, he is not a figure of much importance, certainly critics outside France hardly seem to be aware of his existence. Yet if, as I think, Wiéner is worth writing about at some length it is precisely because of certain qualities which distinguish him *from* the Parisian poseurs of the 'twenties, because of the unique position his *œuvre* occupies. For, temperamentally, Jean Wiéner is of the Chabrier ethos, the one solitary living composer who shares Chabrier's sane, anti-introspective outlook. He is Chabrier's one legitimate descendent, and Les Six, smirkingly enlivening their conceptions with a sprinkling of Low Life in accordance with Cocteau's prescription, were merely impudent bastards. Thus in a sense Wiéner is scarcely a contemporary composer at all, he was born belatedly, a little out of his time. But this is not the whole truth about him, and the fact that he has understood, and modified to his own ends, the principles of Satie's entertainment music makes it clear that he also has realized that to write popular music to-day is a very different matter from writing it in the

[1] The peculiar poised vivacity of Offenbachian *opéra bouffe* is partly explained by Shaw when he says that in *opéra bouffe*, ' the characters, primarily persons of engaging reasonableness, amiability and address, are made irresistibly ridiculous by an exquisite folly, an impossible frivolity of motive, which exhibit them as at once miracles of sensibility and wit and monsters of moral obtuseness.' And he adds that of this wit and incongruity Gilbert and Sullivan present a ' curiously brutalized, embittered, stolidified, middle-classical, mechanical equivalent.'

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time of Chabrier. Wiéner's music has a curious dual quality. On the one hand—insofar as it is related to Chabrier—it is the only surviving example of a spontaneous light music which seems to be (the reason for this *seems* will be apparent later) the product of a society. On the other hand—insofar as it is related to Satie's entertainment music—it represents a remarkably intelligent attempt to adapt itself to the exigencies of a cosmopolitan (and non-social) civilization. As a basis for discussion one might briefly describe Wiéner's music as the last survival of the Chabrier ethos combined with certain characteristics of contemporary cosmopolitan (American) popular music, modified by an understanding of the principles of Satie's entertainment music and by the influence of the machine. The compromise which Wiéner has effected between his typically French sensibility—a sensibility belonging essentially to the past—and the cosmopolitan and utilitarian or commercial characteristics of modern entertainment music seems to me important, even though it is a compromise which implies a comparative deficiency of power.

II.

Jean Wiéner is Parisian through and through, by birth and upbringing. He is an extremely cultivated man and a musicologist of considerable learning and ability ; he has a remarkable talent for spotting the genuinely significant among contemporary artistic productions, and it was, for instance, largely through his untiring efforts that Schönberg's *Pierrot Lunaire* won a tardy acceptance. That he should be a man of so high a degree of cultivation is to the point, for it seems that the nature of his achievement obliged him to a certain self-consciousness. Only a composer of some intellectual distinction could carry on, to-day, from where Chabrier left off ; and we may note that to do so Wiéner had deliberately to create a cabaret (the celebrated *Boeuf sur le Toit*) at which he himself worked as barman and entertainer in company with his negro friends from Harlem. In spite of the other (American and mechanistic) constituents, it is the Parisian café-concert that is at the core of all Wiéner's music. (' Le café-concert est souvent pure . . . il reste intact malgré l'influence anglo-américaine '). How the various elements combined together within Wiéner's Parisianism react upon, and fit in with, one another, will be revealed

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by an examination of his compositions.

The *Sonate pour le Piano* (1928) is the composition in which Wiéner's derivation from Chabrier is most strikingly revealed, but this derivation is implicit throughout his work in the broad sweep and ' juiciness ' of the melodies. The robust swinging tunes—for ' tune ' is, in no derogatory sense, the appropriate word—of the last movement of the Sonata (' Très brillant, sans nervosité '), of the last movement of the *Concerto franco-américain* (' Dans un grand rythme français '), and of the last movement of the *Suite* for violin and piano, are directly comparable with the verve and gaiety of Chabrier and exist, as it were, in an aura of the gaslight and military *bonhomie* of the Parisian stage of the 'nineties. They have a typically French sexual exuberance and bounciness, are completely extraversive, buoyant with bodily movement, yet their wit is faintly tinged with exoticism, with the ' odorous lilac patch,'[1] The jaunty chattering frolic of the first movement of the *Deuxième Sonatine* for piano (dedicated to Yvonne Printemps) is a brilliant example of music which is almost physical exuberance transformed into sound ; one can imagine the composer himself whirling and rollocking to the tune just as Chabrier used to ' rebondir comme un jeune jaguar.'

Wiéner's slow movements—which usually take the form of the popular ballad, with ' verse ' and chorus—are also predominantly sensual in their appeal. Particularly exquisite is the lovely lyric tune that forms the slow movement of the piano Sonata. This is the ripe sentimentality of Offenbach deftly modified with an agreeable element of preciousness. The warmth and tenderness of the melody are redolent of Chabrier and it has something of his expansiveness and humanity. This tune, and the Ballad from the *Concerto franco-américain*, and the comic, yet liltingly beautiful Adagio from the *Deuxième Sonatine*, and the delicious rhetoric and sentimentality of the second of the *Deux Poèmes de Jean Cocteau*, are the apotheosis of the melody of the musical comedy or cabaret, sensual and crudely coloured, yet saved from banality by innate French refinement and wit. Whatever the final impression may be, these tunes of Wiéner are rooted deep in Paris of the past ; this is how they differ from the ' juicy ' tunes of Sauguet or of Milhaud. They are never cynical or knowing ;

[1]The phrase is Adrian Stokes's, used, I believe, of Chabrier.

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compared with Sauguet (whose tunes have a sort of attenuated whimsicality and nostalgia, deriving from Italian comic opera by way of the *fioritura* of Chopin), they are frank and outspoken, proud of their sexuality, with a righteous and hearty scorn for the emaciated busts of most of their contemporaries. This is the strength of Wiéner's music—it preserves something of the animality of Chabrier and Offenbach and it is the only music by a living composer that may be said to do so. Yet still it is true that, compared with Chabrier, Wiéner's music is extremely, even excessively, sophisticated. To understand the forms which this sophistication takes—it is more or less synonymous with the self-consciousness to which, as I have pointed out, the composer was obliged—it will be necessary to glance at certain technical characteristics of this music and, through them, at the other, more ' modern ' elements which complement the Parisian derivation of Wiéner's work and give it its contemporary significance.

To point to stylistic characteristics of Wiéner's music without the use of musical type is not easy, because his style depends to a large extent on what are apparently rather odd personal mannerisms. Melodically, he is never afraid to write the most ' meaty ' of tunes, but these meaty tunes have at times a disconcerting rhythmic freedom ; his melodic line is very elastic, and there may be sudden unexpected extensions or suspensions in the middle of what are apparently almost comically straightforward tunes (*cf.* the slow movement of the piano Sonata).

Connected with this characteristic is the tendency of Wiéner's melodies to indulge, on repetition, in curious atonal arabesques. Some rather crude, but easily analysable, examples of this occur in Wiéner's early set of songs, the *Sept Petites Histoires extraites de l'Alphabet instantané de René des Alyschamps* (1921), in which quaint and gauche linear and rhythmic twists—leaps of sevenths and delayed accents—are introduced into Parisian march, waltz, and ballad tunes, and in which there is a completely crazy fugue on a theme combining the *fauve* aspects of Parisianism with what looks like a deliberate high-spirited assumption of angular eccentricity. A much more mature and emotionally tested example of this device is to be found in the final pages of the *Suite* for violin and piano where the two instruments as it were independently career off into the most extraordinary convolutions and permu-

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tations of one of the most deliciously ludicrous sing-song tunes that even Wiéner ever wrote, ending up respectively on the chords of C major and C minor. This trick may seem to have some analogy with the ' wrong note ' school of composition but actually this is not the case. In effect there is nothing cynical, would-be-critical, or even ' debunking ' about this device, but it is rather an intensification of the pervading animal exuberance. There is a breath-taking vigour and insouciance about it, something of the virility of the circus showman cracking his whip ; even in the slow movements the trick has an intensifying effect, we sense the agility of the nerves and motions, the intellect's pride in performance. This is really only another manifestation of the physical, outward-tending nature of Wiéner's music ; its healthy sensuality is implicit not only in the lilting, odorous ' popularity ' of the tunes which seem to be at any moment about to fall into merely ridiculous cliché but which nevertheless remain always precariously poised, but also in the queer perversions of those juicy tunes into which the composer and executant—for the two are never far separated with Wiéner—seemingly voluntarily, and with a virile self-confidence and *joie de vivre*, plunges. In nearly all Wiéner's work there is thus an element of exhibitionism which is tolerable as the exhibitionism of a beautiful girl may be tolerable, because it is the expression of a just pride in physical well-being and agility ; but of course it becomes wearisome if continued for long. Perhaps this is one reason why Wiéner has written so little, and no ' serious ' compositions at all since about 1930.

This must suffice for an account of Wiéner's melodies. Harmonically, his treatment betrays similar characteristics, and indeed, the integrity of his technique, odd and mannered as it superficially appears, seems the more remarkable the more closely it is examined. Roughly speaking, Wiéner's harmonic sense derives too from Chabrier and has a similar subtle, but rather ripe, highly flavoured and spiced quality. Its basis, though it may not appear so on the printed page, is straightforwardly diatonic, and Wiéner has a liking for bright major keys, especially C, D, and D flat. This may seem an unimportant point but becomes less so when one considers that not one movement of Wiéner's music known to me is written in a minor key. But not only are Wiéner's modulations surprisingly rapid, producing an

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almost kaleidoscopic, elliptical, effect, but, also, to this simple diatonic base are added a number of (inherently logical) harmonic idiosyncrasies that are perhaps the most patent manifestation of the composer's ' sophistication.' Minor ninths and major sevenths are frequently exploited to create a curious quivering background, the choice of the particular semitones being effected with a marvellous insight into the precise tonal qualities of the pianoforte. The cliché chords of post-war jazz—dominant ninths, elevenths, and occasional thirteenths—are taken over and used with exquisite tact ; often they produce a surprising atonality through being combined with melodies in remote keys. There is a particularly happy instance of this early in the development section of the piano Sonata, while the slow movement contains some beautiful examples of the production of what might be called an ' enharmonic ' background. The chord of the tenth with the added ninth is another jazz cliché extensively employed by Wiéner, and in his piano writing he often uses immense masses of tone, accompanying broad melodies by chords of the tenth with varying numbers of adjacent semitones ' filled in.' This expansive use of warm chordal masses—one thinks of such a passage as the piano solo in the middle of the slow movement of the violin *Suite*—is largely responsible for the feeling of bodily and sensual *bonhomie* in the music, but it never becomes cloying since it is juxtaposed with passages of terse polytonality. (In the movement in question the voluptuous harmonic passage is offset by passages in which the piano and fiddle alternately play a broad melody which is accompanied by a strange wavering triplet figure casually shifting between the major and minor chords—a favourite device in Wiéner's music).

Other harmonic peculiarities in this music are occasioned by the composer's Satiean trick of writing symmetrical repetitive figures, especially such figures as ascending or descending fourths alternating with thirds in semi-quavers, accompanied by another symmetrical figure in semi-quavers which may be in a different key. But these ' figures,' producing extraordinary harmonic clashes, are all in the nature of arabesques, rococo or virtuoso decorations which skilfully exploit the sonorities and timbres of the instrument, and there is very little organized polytonality in Wiéner as there is in Milhaud. When polytonality occurs in Wiéner's work, it is usually incidental, the result of the composer's agile manipulation

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of eccentric figurations over an essentially diatonic harmonic scheme. And it is this arabesque-work that accounts for the rouged, demi-mondaine, slightly intoxicated flavour of Wiéner's work, and sometimes gives it, in combination with lagging irregular rhythms and delayed or frustrated suspensions (producing oddly out-of-perspective harmonies rather than polytonality), an atmosphere of artful tipsiness (*cf.* the second page of the song *Souvenirs d'Enfance*, and the middle section of the slow movement of the *Deuxième Sonatine*).

These symmetrical figures are, however, most revealing in that they provide a key to the rhythmic element of Wiéner's work, in which respect it bears some relation to the ' mechanistic ' aspects of Satie's art. Nearly all Wiéner's quicker movements are meant to be played in a rather expressionless, mechanical manner ; such directions as ' Tout à fait en mesure,' ' Très mécanique,' ' Très uniforme, tout le trait dans le même mouvement,' ' martelé,' occur repeatedly ; even the slow movements are to be performed ' avec une absolue simplicité.' There is, however, an important difference between the mechanistic element in Satie and in Wiéner. In Satie, the rhythm becomes mechanical and insistent because of the objective, so-called ' abstract ' tendency of his art, the static and symmetrical phrases are the outcome of his desire to avoid any obvious dramatic expressiveness, and his valses and foxtrots are remarkable precisely because they are honestly utilitarian, above all good valses and good foxtrots—without being bad art. Wiéner's music shares with Satie's incidental pieces a tendency to stress the utilitarian function of popular music, but unlike Satie's it remains primarily sensual in effect and its ' mechanism ' is more a result of the influence of the Machine. I do not, of course, refer to any conscious machine-imitation in the manner of Mossolov or Prokofiev, nor to any mechanical craftiness-in-a-vacuum in the manner of Hindemith ; I mean rather that the Machine has genuinely modified Wiéner's sensibility. The first movement (' Détaché et précis ') of the violin *Suite* is an extreme example of this tendency, with its pounding persistent chords of the tenth with the added ninth and its chromatically shifting minor ninths. The machine-like pulse continues inexorably throughout the piano part while the fiddle, staccato and expressionless, interposes mathematically rigid cross-rhythms. This machine element is

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pervasive in most of Wiéner's work, and while it naturally tends to lessen the sensuousness of his melodies—except in the case of some of the gentler and sweeter of them—it at the same time enhances the general feeling of physical excitement.[1]

It is thus this mechanistic element which provides the link between Wiéner's Parisianism and his Americanism ; both the mechanistic and the sensual aspects are united in his treatment of jazz. 'Merci, chers orchestres nègres d'Amérique, merci magnifiques jazz-bands, de la bienfaisante influence que vous avez eue sur la vraie musique de mon temps,' the composer wrote, and it is quite false to group him with those other French composers such as Ravel and Auric who have deliberately tried to imitate American dance music with a conspicuous and pitiful lack of success. There is no imitation in Wiéner's work. He performed in his cabaret with his friends from Harlem, he took what he wanted from them, Frenchified it, and combined it with his rhythmic sense of the machine. The jazz of Paris of the 'twenties (it was still called jazz in those days) had little relation to the original in Harlem ; it was more polished, more urbane, more elegant. Josephine Baker, in Paris, became less of an artist and more of a commercial proposition, though this doesn't *necessarily* mean that Parisian jazz was inferior to the original, merely that it was different. Jazz in Paris became pervasively ' sweet ' and was, in a rather recondite manner, related to the *fauve* school which is adequately represented by Guillaume Apollinaire.

The direct influence of this Parisian jazz can occasionally be observed in Wiéner's work—in such things as the charming blues from the *Sonatine Syncopée,* and that from the *Concerto franco-américain*.[2] The first of these, in the luminous key of E major,

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[1]The song *Aeronautes,* the first of the *Deux Poèmes de Jean Cocteau,* is perhaps a sort of freak piece or ' sport.' The voice sings operetta or café-chantant tunes over a relentless machine accompaniment, with an effect of calculated impudence and deliberate perversity. The ' excitement ' is (brilliantly) induced.
[2]There is also a ' sweet ' slow Charleston in the slow movement of the Sonata, which exploits added sixths, dominant ninths, and so on. But the effect of the passage as a whole is too solemn and strange to warrant our calling it a direct use of the jazz idiom.

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and with the characteristic direction ' Très calme, très tendre, très piano, très en mesure, le même formule (douce) de sonorité tout le temps,' is a lovely and completely successful transmutation into art of the very spirit of Parisian jazz. Its tenderly flowing, wistful melody is accompanied by the softest rhythmic repeated notes and by muffled detached chords giving the impression of a gentle percussion. The blues from the Concerto is the only occasion in his ' serious ' compositions on which Wiéner extensively employs the conventional *harmonic* idiom of 'sweet' jazz, but even here the candied sensuousness is not in the least enervating or supine ; there is a French salty tang, an ' allure,' in the suavely shaped tune beneath which the familiar chromatic harmonies softly, but sometimes surprisingly, glide.

For the most part, however, the conventional idioms of jazz influence Wiéner very slightly. Thus the first and third movements of the *Sonatine Syncopée* are not, in the popularly accepted sense, ' syncopated ' music at all. The first movement (' Seulement du rythme ') is a study in syncopated rhythms, but that is a different matter. The monotonous percussive repetition of minor ninths, the elaborate interweaving of rhythmic patterns, and brilliant brittle figurations juxtaposed one on top of the other, makes this music a complicated, highly-wrought ' sound-pattern ' rather than an ' expression ' of anything, and the subjugation of the melodic element in this movement—a subjugation very unusual with Wiéner—is obviously significant. It is, indeed, the *mechanical* aspect of early post-war jazz that most interests Wiéner—the negro pianist who performs acrobatics at a prodigious speed and with the mathematical precision of clockwork. The last movement of the *Deuxième Sonatine*, called ' Jazz ' (' Dans le même mouvement, de la première à la dernière mesure du morceau ') is a sort of homage to this post-war negro pianist, with its tenths, its clusters of semitones, its quasi muffled trumpets, its machine-like filigree-work—and perhaps it is no accident that, the French aspects of Wiéner's personality being here in abeyance, the movement should seem curiously commonplace and trivial. The final movement of the *Sonatine Syncopée*, brilliant, glittering, and elegant, is also in one sense an exhibition of acrobatics, though there is also a suggestion of the Parisian *chic* of Offenbach in the appearance of the galloping rhythms of the polka. This acrobatic aspect of

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Wiéner's music—which is, of course, connected with the exhibitionist tendency I have already referred to—has, it must be understood, no relation to the intellectual acrobatics (on paper) of the post-war disciples of Stravinsky and Hindemith, though the reasons for these different phenomena may have been basically the same. Wiéner's acrobatics are, just as much as those of his negro pianists, a physical, not an intellectual performance ; like his consciousness of the Machine, they enforce, rather than detract from the physical impact of the music.

How Wiéner's exploitation of the sensuousness of Parisian jazz is combined, by way of the characteristic acrobatics, with his sense of the Machine is very neatly revealed in an odd early work called *Trois Blues Chantés* (1923). The melancholia, nostalgia, and sophistication of Parisian jazz are present in these little blues, but these qualities are refined to a quintessence through that feeling of ' detachment ' which is represented to a large extent by the composer's sense of the Machine. Wiéner does not seem personally involved in these emotions ; the typical melodic and harmonic clichés are used very sparingly and tend to become, as melodic clichés do in Satie's utilitarian music, parts of a dynamic pattern and scheme. Paradoxical as it may seem, this work, Wiéner's closest approximation in his serious music to an imitation of the form of contemporary popular music—with the exception of the isolated movements already discussed—is in actual effect less sensual (though not perhaps less physical) than any other of his compositions.

Understanding of Wiéner's music is intimately bound up with his treatment of the piano since all the characteristic mannerisms I have described were devised with Wiéner's own instrument, the piano, in mind. Whether one finds his music agreeable or whether one finds it irritating depends a good deal upon individual taste, but anyone who has heard Wiéner play the piano has to admit that he is a prodigious and in some ways an unprecedented piano virtuoso.[1] And he is probably the only virtuoso capable of performing adequately his own music. The executant of Wiéner's piano music must be able to ' sing ' a tune but he must also have the

[1] I believe the celebrated Wiéner-Doucet two-piano combination can still occasionally be heard at *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*.

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faculty of negotiating massive chordal clusters and sequences of brittle passage-work which are the product of symmetrically arranged note-patterns. These patterns, which make few concessions to the lie of the fingers, have to be played with a curiously stiff-jointed action and with mechanical regularity. Apart from Wiéner himself, the only executant who, one imagines, might perform this music satisfactorily is such a brilliant ' mechanical ' pianist as the American Art Tatum, but even he, though he has the appropriate sort of technique, could hardly be expected to appreciate the spirit of the ripe-flavoured Parisianism of Wiéner's music which is, after all, ultimately its essence. The extreme, and inevitable, idiosyncrasy of the technique of Wiéner's work is another reason why the composer has written so little ; the possibilities of so specialized a medium are soon exhausted.

III.

And this, I suppose, might be thought a damaging admission. Is it—it might be asked—really worth while describing in such detail the work of a composer who wrote, in the nineteen-twenties, a handful of eccentric-seeming pieces for piano and one or two songs, and, in his early thirties, voluntarily relinquished composition? If my answer to this question is obviously in the affirmative it is because, by examining these little pieces, we can learn both what ' light ' music *was* and what, in relation to the modern scene, it is likely to be. We may obtain through these compositions some sort of inside light on the difficulties of the creator of entertainment music to-day. The fact that Wiéner gave up composition so early is testimony to his intelligence. He wrote so little partly, of course, because it was a very little thing he had to say ; but also I think we may look upon these compositions as experiments *towards* a satisfactory personal form of entertainment music and consider them mainly valuable as such. Since about 1930 Wiéner has, anyway, devoted himself to the writing of utilitarian music for dancing and cinema, and it is this aspect of his work that we must now consider.

The one palpable, yet so often neglected, truth that Wiéner's music brings home to us is that there are, ultimately, only two alternatives for entertainment music. Either, like the cinema music

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and valses of Satie, it must be honestly utilitarian, be functional, music (say) for dancing, or music expressly designed to accompany a film ; or else—if it is meant merely to be listened to—it must be sufficiently the work of an individual and distinguished mind to warrant consideration as a form of minor art. Wiéner's music, like that of Offenbach among composers of *opéra bouffe*, fulfils both these conditions. The popular tunes which he has written in recent years to be danced to and listened to as ' entertainment '—I am not thinking of the tunes he wrote ten years ago at *Le Boeuf sur le Toit*, for in these he had not found himself and was rather feebly imitating American originals—manifest abounding vivacity and jauntiness. Their spontaneous tunefulness is inexhaustible, and their exhilarating effect, gay and brisk, and sometimes, as in the waltzes, caressingly sentimental, but never inert or sloppy—seems to increase rather than diminish on repeated hearing, thus providing a striking contrast to the exhilaration—if such it be—of even the best American dance tune. Anglo-American dance music would be in a very much healthier condition if it could boast of such a pair as Wiéner and his lyric writer Louis Poterat, though both the tunes and lyrics are so essentially French—closer to the café-chantant tune than to the Americanized convention they are written in—that it is difficult to imagine any Anglo-American equivalent. To realize their superiority over anything the English-speaking world can produce one has only to listen to such a deliciously singable, lilting insouciant tune as *Elle avait un p'tit quelque chose*, with its amiably detached lyric, and then to consider the inane trickle that an American song-writer would have made of the same well-worn theme.

There is nothing particularly evil about modern American dance-music *as such* ; the trouble is that there is so much dance music which serves no purpose whatever but merely permeates the atmosphere leaving a stale flavour of alcohol and cigarette ash. (As Shaw said, ' Why, in the name of reason, should the accompaniment to a dance be played in public without the dance, any more than the accompaniment to a song.').[1] Yet if it is a vain

[1]Here ' impinges,' of course, the question of Swing music. The swing-music ramp is, on the whole, deplorable—the side-splitting gravity of the average swingster implying a more than comic

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hope to think that even a small army of tune writers with the comparative intelligence of an Oscar Levant could drive out of existence the hordes of the hacks of Tin Pan Alley, there are at least signs that the existence of the problem is becoming recognized. In the Soviet, of course, ' music for the people ' is manufactured to order, the scheme being vitiated by the regrettable fact that none of the Soviet composers, with the minor exception of Prokoviev and Kabalevsky, seems to possess the modicum of talent requisite for such (or any other) an undertaking. (The dismally dull, moribund and academically facetious theatre music of Shaporin seems to be accepted as adequate ; it is, anyway, representative). In England, most of the young British composers have tried their hand at some sort of utilitarian music, but for the most part they have (apparently) not the right sort of talent or else they have considered the task unworthy of their serious attention.[2] France is more fortunate in this respect because the French temperament is naturally adapted to this type of music. Wiéner is, anyway, an

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pretentiousness. But at the same time, if it could only be realized that swing music is not a ' new art ' but merely a tottering arrival at the basic principles of jazz as established many years ago in Harlem, and if only swing music could be employed for strictly utilitarian ends, it might yet prove its usefulness to the community. For jazz as played by such a band as Benny Goodman's, and as performed by such instrumentalists as the late Bix Beiderbecke or by such singers as Alice Faye, is at least less mushy-minded, even more mature, than its equivalent of ten years back.

[2]The one obvious, and brilliant, exception is, of course, Lord Berners, but he—though his measure is by no means summed up in his satirical and parodistic pieces since he has, in the ballets and in the operetta *La Carosse de St. Sacrament*, created an unavoidably arch, but genuinely English corollary of Offenbachian effervescence—is not so much a ' popular ' composer as a composer of witty and exotic *genre* pieces. He is *essentially* a sophisticate ; whereas Wiéner is a sophisticate only in his surface airs and graces. Walton's sparkling *Façade* is really only an ingenious *jeu d'esprit* ; and Vaughan Williams's *The Poisoned Kiss* is a *tour de force*, a ' popular ' comic opera which is unfortunately too good to be popular.

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example worth consideration. He writes popular dance music which is preferably to be danced to ; but, if it is merely listened to, it is sufficiently amusing and virile in itself to make a faint protest against the pervasive mushroom growth of restaurant-music mentality.

IV.

Finally, I am going to offer a few remarks about the other type of entertainment music, that which is purely utilitarian, and designed to perform a specific function. I shall confine my attention to the cinema, the form which Wiéner has practised, and try to indicate what seems to be the most intelligent method of creating a musical accompaniment to a film. This will involve consideration of the *Entr'acte cinématographique* from *Relâche* (to the film of René Clair), in which Erik Satie evolved a complete theory of film-music which has not yet been superceded, and of which every intelligent composer of film-music, including Wiéner, has been obliged to take account. The technique of writing music for the silent film was conditioned by the fact that the musical accompaniment had to be continuous, so that any of the recognized musical forms was patently impracticable. Melodic themes were confined, for the most part, to very short episodes of the film, and because these episodes were so constantly shifting, it was necessary that the music, while to some extent reflecting these changes, should proceed with a certain uniformity—without, that is, any very violent or jarring melodic or rhythmic alterations ; the music had to stress the inner dramatic continuity of the film, if there were any, and if there were not it served partially to disguise that deficiency. Satie's music to *Relâche* throughout provides a background ; it nowhere tries to give musical expression to the images of the screen but rather serves to keep the listener in a state of ready response to those images without ever calling attention to itself. It is not purely decorative, but the epithet is justifiable insofar as it indicates the detachment, dramatically and pictorially, of the music from the film. Melodically, Satie relies on very short, flexible phrases which are repeated in more or less symmetrical patterns, usually over a mechanical percussion. Occasionally a rather broader tune with a popular tang reminiscent of the early

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valses is introduced but it remains, as it were, merely a part of a dynamic scheme, and quite without sentimental or pictorial associations.

With the establishment of the sound film the nature of the problem is somewhat altered, since there is no longer any necessity for continuous musical accompaniment—it is more possible to write in the traditional musical forms, especially such repetitive forms as the rondo. Yet the principles established by Satie still essentially hold good ; music for the sound film should seldom be illustrative and only indirectly interpretive. I don't think the most ' advanced ' living composers of film music—Hanns Eisler, Karol Rathaus and Arthur Honneger—have added anything substantial to Satie's technique, while the latter's sparse, clear-cut orchestration (' sans sauce ') and clean polyphony anticipate by twenty years the transparency of tone and outline that to-day the microphone demands. The orchestra of Satie, who was writing for, and had heard of, only the silent film, would be as adequate for the sound-film of the present as the carefully contrived stringless orchestra of Eisler in which trumpets, clarinets, trombones and saxophones (but not the suaver woodwinds such as oboes and flutes) weave the melodies over a rhythmic and harmonic base of piano and percussion. Satie's interlude to *Relâche* seems to me the most important music which has yet been composed for the cinema, and the only criticism one can make is that, with all its penetrating understanding of the problems involved, it is too subtle, too delicately organized, to be really *popular*. The problem that confronts the ' intelligent ' young composer of film-music seems to me to be that of finding some compromise between Satie's methods and those of the popular film musical-comedy. We admit that for the hosts of ' Wagnerian ' scores—Wagnerian in method, that is—to the average commercial film there is nothing to be said, and precious little for the efforts of serious composers like Bliss, Goossens and Walton, which differ from those of the average hack only in being somewhat less obviously vulgar, and which succeed in making money for their composers without being either good music or good film-music, while as commercial music (*i.e.*, ' Entertainment ') they are patently inferior to the best tunes of Cole Porter, (such as *Night and Day*) or of Oscar Levant (such as *Don't Mention Love to Me*). But if the music associated with the popular

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cinema is to become less pernicious, and still be popular, some such compromise is unavoidable ; and Chaplin's music to *Modern Times* seems to me remarkable precisely because it achieves this synthesis, even though (or perhaps because) it makes no pretension to musical interest. (One would like to know if Chaplin was acquainted with Satie's film music when he devised the score to *Modern Times*).

The unique advantages which Wiéner enjoys as a composer of cinema-music should now be apparent ; he has the temperament, and the intelligence, to appreciate the brilliance and integrity of Satie's methods, and he has also, through his ancestry in the Paris of Offenbach, the ability to write tunes that appeal if not to the ' mass ' of the people of a cosmopolitan world—the ' man in the street ' is, anyway, outside France, never given a chance with Wiéner's music—at least to the majority of the people of his own country. And surely if there is ever to be a new kind of popular art it might well be a new cinematic form of the *opéra bouffe* such as Wiéner, of all composers, is naturally endowed to create. The chances that a cinematic form of grand opera—assuming it were wanted—could ever be evolved are negligible because the film invites too dangerous an intimacy with the characters. But the enormous vogue for the high-brow film-cartoon itself suggests that there are possibilities for the cinema in an extremely formalized and stylized sort of comic opera in which the characters are treated almost as depersonalized puppets. In this respect the work of Satie again provides a precedent for his *Le Piège de Méduse* (1913), (*Comédie en un acte de M. Erik Satie, avec musique du même Monsieur*) would, produced by such a typically French artist as René Clair, make a superb short sound-film almost without adaptation. Musically it is one of the finest of Satie's ' popular ' works, of a delicious ' allure ' and gaiety, and its clean, neat scoring—for clarinet, trumpet, trombone, violin, 'cello, doublebass and percussion—would be perfectly suited to the microphone. I wish some enterprising film company could be persuaded to give Clair and Wiéner a commission to produce a few short cinematic *opéras bouffes* along similar lines.

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V.

This, then, is one of the ways in which a man with a talent such as Wiéner's, and with his intelligence, might do a little towards raising the level of entertainment-music in our cosmopolitan civilization. The question, of course, is more difficult than my account would suggest, for the very obvious reason that men with Wiéner's sort of talent, and with his intelligence, are hard to come by, and, even when they are discovered, there is no sure means of guaranteeing them commercial support. Nonetheless, composers of commercial music ought—if they have consciences left—to look to Wiéner's music both serious and utilitarian as a reminder of what their calling ought to be ; whether they write music for the cinema, or music for dancing to, or—most dismal monstrosity of our music-producing times—music for eating to, they will learn from Wiéner's work that the music of social intercourse—of the casual glance, the fortuitous conversation—may still be sane and full-blooded, turned outward to the world, sensual but never vulgar, merry but never trivial, witty but never cheap.[1]

W. H. MELLERS.

[1]All the ' serious ' compositions of Wiéner mentioned in this essay are published by Max Eschig et Cie, Paris. The production of this edition of his works is fittingly charming and elegant but there are an absurd number of typographical errors. (A passage in the violin *Suite* is, as printed, unplayable). Many of Wiéner's dance tunes and film musics are published by Les Editions Echos, Quai des Orfèvres, Paris. The most interesting films for which he has composed scores are *L'Homme à l'Hispano* (1933), *L'Ane de Buridan* (1933), *Jeanne* (1935), and *L'Aventurier* (1935).

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REVENGERS AGAINST TIME

Revengers against time we have denied
Ourselves the lifted head, relied
On the pistol, the pacers, the held stop-watch.
But let us look closer, anatomize tendon
And Achilles heel, outfight the stitch
That turns youth bitter in the mouth.
Others have been before us, Fabius delaying,
Cincinnatus with hand on the plough, Jacob
Serving seven years. When the high moment
Comes we may fob it off, ease up and take our dividend
In earlier victories, attested records ; then
Sink back into plush and be complacently mobbed
By autograph hunters. One cannot, granted,
Live always at the spurt, challenge must have end
As circling swallows that nose for direction
Suddenly swing. But the soul mines deep,
Has galleries of stooping pain, vaults
That come ruining down. Here is no sudden
Triumph, no chance diamond: pick must pierce,
Unpiece, tear to tatters this dog-eared life,
Thumbed by subordinates, or we resign
To subaltern eclipse and dark terrestrial circuit.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

TRAHISON DES CLERCS

RETOUR DE l'U.R.S.S., by André Gide (N.R.F., 7 fr. 50).
RETOUCHES A MON RETOUR DE l'U.R.S.S., by André Gide, (N.R.F. 9 fr.).
SOVIET DEMOCRACY, by Pat Sloan, a Left Book Club Choice.

The position of what can be conveniently called *les clercs* in contemporary society has received critical attention in most of the countries of Europe and has often been discussed in these pages. In seeking to draw attention to these little books of Gide, one's intention is not to adduce further evidence about Russia, for there is little here that could not have been gathered from other sources, by those, at least, who are not blinded by partisan prejudice. They serve rather as a classical instance of what happens to the *clerc* who descends into the arena at the hands of his fellow *clercs* ; from this example one may judge of the chances of disinterested effort in the field of political opinion. It is not so much what Gide has to say that is of importance, as the the reception his book received and its reaction on himself.

It will be necessary, however, for a proper understanding of the situation to resume his main theses in *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* They all centre around *le conformisme*. His gravest charge against the present regime in Russia is that not only is every effort made to suppress criticism, but that these efforts are already meeting with surprising success. Only those who conform rise to prominence, and therefore a new class has been created resembling the hated bourgeois. Only those who are prepared to obey Stalin are promoted and therefore the dictatorship of the proletariat is being changed into the dictatorship of one man. The effect on the arts is disastrous. Gide expresses these opinions in their extreme form. He ends the tirade on which I have drawn for this account ; *et je doute qu'en aucun autre pays aujourd'hui, fût-ce dans l'Allemagne de Hitler, l'esprit soit moins libre, plus courbé, plus craintif (terrorisé) plus vassalisé.*

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One could, however, extract a large number of passages of pure praise of various features of the Russian scene. *Retour de l'U.R.S.S.* bears none of the marks of a bigoted *parti pris*. At the same time, there are places where sentiment seems to have taken the place of judgment and where he raises questions (chiefly tactical—*l'écartement du Léninisme*, for example) too large for the size of the book. On the whole, however, it compares favourably, as coming from a distinguished French writer, with other books of this type, such as Wilson's *Travels in Two Democracies*, which was reviewed in a previous number.

It is a notable feature of the situation under review that M. Gide's accession to the ranks of Communism was hailed as evidence of that alignment of *les clercs* into two camps that Wilson once wrote of. His case is typical and differs only in being more resounding than that of others. For apart from one or two critics (and of those I have been able to read Friedmann is the best) the entire forces of the Left were turned against him. His praise of the U.S.S.R. was largely overlooked, while his criticisms were met by wholesale denials and many unwholesome attacks on his good faith. At the same time the Right press, again ignoring his favourable remarks, used his attacks for their own ends. The book has had a considerable sale. Friedmann writes with justice: *auprès de milliers de Français . . . l'U.R.S.S. est condamnée . . . et à travers l'U.R.S.S. . . . le communisme. Dans les Ecoles, certains, j'en ai la preuve, se servent déjà de vos pages pour maintenir les jeunes 'dans la bonne voie.' Les subtiles réserves de vos conclusions n'y ont rien fait. Je sais que ce n'est pas cela que vous vouliez; telle est néanmoins la résonnance sociale et politique, la résonnance réelle de vos paroles.*

It is evident that Gide was not entirely prepared for such a reception. One of his companions on the tour, Dabit, who shared substantially his opinion, said of Gide, *lui saura se faire entendre. On comprendra que c'est en ami qu'il parle.* Gide himself, while recognizing that he was giving a handle to the *partis ennemis*, believed that, *la vérité, fût-elle douloureuse, ne peut blesser que pour guérir.* How far he and his friend were wrong, we have seen. There is clearly no general wish among Communists and Communist sympathisers to admit the grave dangers which threaten their ideals in the present conduct of the U.S.S.R. One has only

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to glance at *Soviet Democracy* to establish the atmosphere of the sanctioned approach to Russia. It is one in which the critical spirit stifles. In his reply to his critics Gide makes one effective point: those who are responsible for informing the public of what goes on in Russia tend to hide the truth behind a pleasing fiction. *Ce que je reproche*, says Gide, *surtout à l'U.R.S.S., c'est de nous l'avoir baillé en nous présentant la situation des ouvriers là-bas comme enviable. Et je reproche aux communistes de chez nous (oh ! je ne parle pas des camarades dupés, mais de ceux qui savaient, ou du moins auraient dû savoir) d'avoir menti aux ouvriers, inconsciemment ou sciemment—et dans ce cas par politique*. Gide himself, it appears, was a victim: *mon grand tort était de trop croire aux louanges*.

Yet another feature of the situation deserves attention. The bitterness of the attacks made on him has turned Gide from a disinterested *clerc* into a clever polemist who does not despise the usual methods of the arena. We find him employing as his authorities (for in *Retouches* he relies for the most part on the work of other visitors to Russia) the most suspect along with more reliable critics—and without noticeable distinction. He uses statistics (taken, it is true, from *Pravda*) without a careful discussion of their significance. And what is more remarkable, there is in the later book none of that generous admiration of the good in Russia which was so plentiful in his first account. The clear, if excitable, air of *Retour* has changed to something sulphurous. Though he replies effectively to many criticisms, it is clear that in yielding to his indignation he has in large measure been led into betraying his function.

H. A. MASON.

CHINESE POETS AND OTHERS

CHINESE LYRICS, translated by Ch'u Ta-Kao (Cambridge University Press, 4/6).

SELECTED POEMS, by Allen Tate (Scribner, 7/6).

JOURNEYS AND PLACES, by Edwin Muir (Dent, 2/6).

When Yeats wrote, ' Whatever the passions of men have gathered about becomes a symbol in the Great Memory and, in the hands of him that has the secret of it, a worker of wonders, a

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caller up of angels or of devils,' he cut close to the core of the secret of Chinese poetry. For, because of the immense antiquity of Chinese civilization, the most casual incidents of everyday life have acquired a wealth of inherited experience, a wisdom, of almost symbolical potency. For this reason, Chinese poetry deals mostly in incidents, apparently simple incidents which have the rich associations of an ageless tradition. In such a poem as Li Yu's *Court Life* there is no indication that the poet has any feelings about the incident he relates, nor does the incident itself seem to be particularly pregnant with imaginative association. Yet the poem is patently—even in translation—poetry, and its emotional overtones are, as it were, communicated to it from an ancient and finely civilized way of living.

An excellent account of the *method* of Chinese poetry is given in a lyric by Hsin Ch'i-chi which I will quote complete:

In my youth I had no idea of what sorrow was,
And loved to go up lofty buildings.
Upon the lofty buildings,
For composing new poems I was forced to talk of sorrow.

Now I know sorrow throughly well,
And am loath to talk of it.
Loath to talk of it,
I say instead; 'What a chilly autumn day!'

Now when the Chinese poet says 'What a chilly autumn day' he is not uttering a dead cliché but venting an emotionally tested experience of the men of his race through innumerable centuries. There may be much personal feeling in the relation of incident which is Chinese poetry—an aura of recreated mood and atmosphere—but the feeling is not expatiated on, nor even regarded specifically as a personal accident—joy or distress—to the poet (as it most often is, of course, in European poetry). It is recognized that such things happen to everyone, and have done so for thousands of years—hence the urbane suavity, the avoidance of personal animus, in the poet's promiscuous weeping.

I gaze over the water to where it mingles with clouds,
And watch the crows until they become specks.
South, north, east, west, everywhere is grief.
Alone I lean first on one side of the balustrade, then on the other.

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The concrete, clinching particularity of the last line is magnificent. The poet does not describe grief, he states an incident which miraculously becomes it ; always he states a simple incident in language which is ungarnished, in images which are primarily visual ; images of objects (flying geese, scarlet dragons, etc.) which have acquired, by traditional sanction, a latent symbolism. Most of the imagery is conventional (conveying to an English reader but little of its full import) and the metaphorical complexity of English verse is not common in it. Nonetheless, each completed poem forms, sometimes deliberately, more often accidentally, a created metaphor ; each poem is a bud emerging from the stem of one of the themes (Separation, Drunkenness, Old Age, etc.) accepted by the tortoise-like evolution—in which change is scarcely perceptible—of Chinese civilization. Chinese lyrics have thus a curiously static and timeless air and are really as remote from our consciousness as the (to the time-obsessed European ear) almost ungraspably slow rhythmic organization of Oriental music. Mr. Ch'u Ta-Kao's translations seem to me, as one ignorant of Chinese, sensitive and alive, and the interested reader will wish to add them to those collections so admirably translated by Arthur Waley.

Mr. Allen Tate is concerned with civilization in a manner very different from that characteristic of the Chinese. He is a Southerner, with something of John Crowe Ransome's innocently urbane toughness and something of Frost's amiably grim New England morality, but he is more pretentious than these, more 'intellectual,' cultivated and academic, and one of the themes of his verse is the conflict between the tendency towards acceptance of or regression to simple and childish pleasures

> (When the peace is a trade route, figures
> For the budget, reduction of population,
> Life grows sullen and immense,
> Lusts after immunity to pain.)

and the half-formulated desire to enter the world of political action. Where he attempts to deal comprehensively with these questions his verse seems to me merely dull. He has bitten off more than he can chew, failed to grasp his theme and its implications, so that there is a divorce between his cerebration about his theme and whatever it is he may be supposed actually to have experienced.

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It is, I suppose, an unfair distortion of a more or less sensible and well-intentioned remark to say that Mr. Tate (in a prefatory note) proudly confesses that he has experienced nothing at all, (' as a poet I have never had any experience . . . and my concern is the experience I hope the reader will have in reading the poem ') ; but the nerveless movement, the dry functioning of a segregated intellect, in *Ode to the Confederate dead* and *To the Lacedemonians*, tempt one to suggest this malicious implication. Really, I think, Mr. Tate is unfair to himself. His best verse—and he is a serious poet, if a very little one—seems to me to be not his ambitious sociological poems, nor the poems in which he is being cerebral (playing at Donne and flirting with Webster and the Jacobean shroud), nor those in which he is being wittily urbane (giving the slightest twist to the early Eliot formula), but those which arise quite patently from personal experience. Such poems are *The Wolves*, *The Idiot*, and *The Cross*. They are fragments of experience only ; fragments which he hasn't synthesized. But he speaks in them an individual language (related to Ransome's ' ripeness,' but more mature), and the metaphors and rhythms are livingly created.

> (Now remember courage, go to the door,
> Open it and see whether coiled on the bed
> Or cringing by the wall a savage beast
> Maybe with golden hair, with deep eyes
> Like a bearded spider on a sunlit floor
> Will snarl—and man can never be alone).

Mr. Muir writes mythical symbolical poems in plain unmetaphorical language and simple euphonious rhythms. You can do this if you live in an ancient civilization, like the Chinese, which will provide you with plenty of traditional symbols readily intelligible to your audience ; or you can do it if you have the visionary imagination of a William Blake. Mr. Muir is not a Blake, nor does he live in an ancient society, he is merely an intelligent and disinterested critic with little aptitude for poetry. When he writes in ' freer ' or more complicated rhythms they derive from one of Mr. Eliot's later manners. ' Conclusion without fulfilment.'

W.H.M.

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THE FALL OF THE CITY, a Verse Play for Radio, by Archibald MacLeish (Boriswood, 3/6).

I had not thought, before I read Mr. MacLeish, that any writer not an English Public School-boy Communist could possibly be as inept as most E.P.S.C.'s are. I was wrong. Mr. MacLeish is not only as inept as the English product, he is also incompetent. There is a knot of passion in Auden's dramatic work ; he has some feelings, though he doesn't always appear to know much about them, and much of his poetry is successful, in the sense that he does communicate to the reader: but in *The Fall of the City* there is nothing but good-will, good wishes and a dull and rarified idealism. Mr. MacLeish reminds me of Longfellow.

In his foreword he argues that wireless is an admirable vehicle for the contemporary poet for two reasons, the first of which is that ' a radio play consists of words and word equivalents and nothing else ' and that ' the spoken word is an implement which poets have always claimed to use with a special authority.' Without stopping to ask what exactly a ' word equivalent ' is, we may I think agree with this, and pass on to the second reason, which is that the poetic drama wants a chorus or commentator, and that the wireless commentator 'is an integral part of radio technique . . . his presence, without more, restores to the poet that obliquity, that perspective, that three dimensional depth without which great poetic drama cannot exist.' Here it seems to me is a peculiarly American faith in technology applied to literature ; a faith as touching and ingenuous as the recent American adoration for technology in economics, and equally futile.

The play itself is symbolic, and is about dictatorships, which the author thinks are bad things. The announcer describes how a great crowd has assembled in the city square to hear a woman risen from the dead prophesy to them. She tells them that

> The city of masterless men
> Will take a master.
> There will be shouting then:
> Blood after!

Messengers arrive in various stages of exhaustion (' his neck's back at the nape, he looks tired '), telling of the conqueror's approach ; speeches are made, persuading to reason, to religion, to arms ;

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but the people give way—' he is one man, we are but thousands.' When the armour-clad conqueror comes they kneel before him ; he ascends the temple steps, and as he does so his visor falls, and the announcer sees that there is nothing inside the armour ; but the people, their faces in the dust, can't see this:

> The people invent their oppressors: they wish to believe in them.
> They wish to be free of their freedom: released from their liberty:
> The long labour of liberty ended! They lie there!

So the prophecy has come true:

> The city of masterless men has found a master!
> The city has fallen!

The sentiments, you see, are admirable. His verse, on the other hand, is not. Mr. MacLeish insists that it is written for speaking, and that is just where it seems to me to fail ; for try as I may, I cannot read it with ease, and I do not remember ever to have read verse which jarred on me so much. The reason for this is I think, that great use is made of metrical accents, and that these accents are neither related to any conceivable speech rhythm, nor are they made into a regular pattern. The ear constantly expects rhythms to be repeated, and is as constantly disappointed. Listen to this:

> The crowd is enormous: there might be ten thousand:
> There might be more: the whole square is faces:
> Opposite over the roofs are the mountains.
> It is quite clear: there are birds circling.
> We think they are kites by the look: they are very high . . .

The first line appears to be four amphibrachs. like ' He promised to buy me a bunch of blue ribbon.' I don't suppose this is intentional, but whether it is or no a sudden strong regular rhythm such as this has little connection with the other lines ; but if it's not intentional, what's the point of it? After a lot of this, all vitiated with that most enervating device, the weak ending, it is quite a relief to come across a paraphrase of a bit of *Hamlet* done in blank verse:

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Before the murders of the famous kings—
Before imperial cities burned and fell—
The dead were said to show themselves and speak.

Here is one more sample of Mr. MacLeish's verse, or perhaps I should say Poetry:

Listeners over the curving air have heard
From farthest-off frontiers of foreign hours—
Mountain Time: Ocean Time: of the islands:
Of waters after the islands—some of them waking
Where noon here is the night there: some
Where noon is the last few stars they see or the last one.

I prefer this original sentiment in the *Ancient and Modern version ;*

The sun that bids us rest is waking
Our brethren 'neath the Western sky.

It's neater, more concise, and boy, has it got rhythm.

He is amazingly insensitive to words.

This conqueror unresisted
Will conquer no longer ; a posturer
Beating his blows upon burdocks—
Shifting his guard against shadows.

Yes, it is ' burdocks.' I was mistaken myself at first. Actually, nothing else would make sense in this context, which makes the whole thing even more annoying. One is reminded of the ' poor sod ' in Wordsworth's *Poet's Epitaph*: but whereas one has become accustomed to that sort of thing in the Romantics, there ought to be no excuse for it nowadays.

Like so many other contemporary productions, this play is inspired by the worthiest sentiments, and it represents a genuine and admirable desire on the poet's part to put himself at the service of his fellow men ; but there's no life in it, no sap ; and Mr. MacLeish doesn't yet seem to have learnt that if he is to write successfully about contemporary life, he must use a contemporary idiom. The worst thing one can say of him is, that he is an American who writes in second-rate ' literary ' English.

T. R. BARNES.

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VITALITY IN SOCIAL SURVEYS

MIDDLETOWN IN TRANSITION, by Robert S. Lynd and Helen Merrell Lynd (Constable, 1937, 18/- net).

MAY THE TWELFTH, Mass-Observation Day-Survey, edited by Humphrey Jennings, Charles Madge, etc. (Faber and Faber, 1937, 12/6 net).

Just as the war of 1914 gave the psychopathologists their great opportunity, so the depression of 1929-35, by increasing various social stresses, has given Mr. and Mrs. Lynd an opportunity of demonstrating even more explicitly than in their first book some of the fundamental conflicts within the culture of Middletown. The increased tension between business and working class was to be expected, but in many other directions also the crisis has made possible a sharpening of focus. And further, as the authors constantly insist, it has set precedents that can never be entirely forgotten. Organized relief on a large scale for the unemployed and comparatively lavish expenditure on public works (partly met by the Federal government) were two new experiences which profoundly disturbed the customary beliefs and sentiments of the community ; with the lifting of the depression the old ways are restored, but the precedent has been set once and for all. This new book largely follows the scheme of the previous one, with the familiar headings ' Getting a Living,' ' Spending Leisure,' and so forth, but it invites rather more continuous reading since, with the other to refer to, there need not be quite such a weight of detailed evidence. Two excellent chapters, one on the reigning family of the place and the other called ' The Middletown Spirit,' would have been valuable supplements to the earlier book even without the clinching effect given by the events of the depression.

Middletown and *Middletown in Transition* are pre-eminent among social surveys in combining two qualities that more often exclude one another. The first is the sense of urgency they give—the sense that the authors have got to write about Middletown because what it stands for is pressing on their lives. The second is their intellectual discipline. It is the defensive, meticulous care forced on critics of a complex culture who have to defend them-

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selves not only against damaging retorts but against the worse danger of seeing their own critical framework collapse under test and itself disappear into the cultural chaos it was designed to show up. Their approach, that is, is scientific and not propagandist. Without critical insight, without hatred of much that they see, their discipline of exact observation, of avoiding overstatement, of being appreciative where they can, and in general of giving the devil his due, would be of no account. But without the intellectual discipline their critical insight and their intention of intellectual integrity would have been only a tenth as formidable as they are.

The strength of the method lies in revealing the culture's defects only by pointing out its inconsistencies and lack of internal coherence. The following footnote is typical of the method and of the authors' defensive preciseness: ' Needless to add, the writers are not intending to pass a judgment in the above pages as to whether Middletown's divorces should or should not be easy to get. The point under discussion here is the split between local public theory and actual practice.' If the community is to be condemned, let it be out of its own mouth.

The chapter on ' The Middletown Spirit ' includes brief references to what, for many intelligent people, is of vital importance: the loopholes in the culture, the possibilities of leading a life different from the modal and getting away with it. A full treatment of this topic would need different techniques from those that Mr. and Mrs. Lynd have used up to the present, but it is a further proof of the vitality of their work that they do at least refer to it.

The Mass-Observation survey of the day of the Coronation lacks all sense of urgency. It is, by implication, critical of the culture under review, but its critical standpoint is that of a stock-size leftishness, so that whether you agree or disagree will depend not on the book but on the preconceptions you bring to it. Beyond indicating this general alignment the editors' occasional comments on their material are chiefly of two kinds. On the one hand they offer the trifling ideas that even now may be found in the more futile sorts of anthropology: ' Out of the many possible studies of the Coronation crowds, it seems worth while attempting to list the uses to which they put paper. Paper was used in . . . ' On the other hand there are the usual, almost meaningless, pseudo-

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psychological inflations: 'This popular joke that you might go mad if you waited without reading gives a striking view of our universal education and neurosis.'

The reports themselves, it need hardly be said, are very much better than the use they have been put to, and they may seem surprisingly good to those who have never handled this kind of material. But with such jejune ideas directing the survey, the view they give of the superficies of our culture is only the view that everyone (except possibly those who have been segregated in public schools) will have picked up casually by the age of eighteen. What weight of interpretation they will support could be judged only after a close inspection of the methods by which they were collected and the relation of the people who took part to the rest of the community.

Detailed criticism of the technique is pointless, however, when the more fundamental objection has to be made that the whole conception is vapid. It may seem curious that it should be, in the worst sense, so academic. But consider the most ambitious proposal for making something of the data. It begins with the concept of the social incident, a concept almost unbelievably vague and as unstimulating as it well could be: 'A rough definition of a social incident would therefore be an occurrence of sufficient importance to be recorded by an Observer at the end of the day.' From this the editors go on to say that the increasingly numerous reports 'are forming the basis of a more exhaustive index to human activities [than this book offers], starting from the concept of the *social incident*. By collecting, filing and sorting these incidents in large numbers, we hope to be able to produce a scientific classification for them.' The main objection to ideas such as these is not that they are presented half-baked, nor that they are bumptious, but simply that they are not sufficiently interesting.

D. W. HARDING.

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PLAN FOR PUBLIC TASTE

INDUSTRIAL ART IN ENGLAND, by Nikolaus Pevsner. pp. 234, 24 illustrations. (Cambridge University Press, 16/-).

In two years, according to the dust wrapper, Dr. Pevsner visited ' a hundred and fifty manufactories, assessing the virtues of their products, inquiring into the genesis of their designs, getting from directors, managers, craftsmen, foremen, designers, their reasons, their methods, their attitude to design. Then he went to the stores and shops to find out what effect they believed design to have on sales. And finally he found a way to test the reactions to design of potential purchasers.' The bulk of the data deals with the producing side, and the information from consumers consists of the answers to a questionnaire given by ninety-two people at an Industrial Art exhibition in the Midlands. Since the work was carried out at the suggestion of the head of the Department of Commerce, Birmingham University, the concern primarily with the producing and distributing sides is understandable. But it seems to me to have encouraged Dr. Pevsner to arrive at some questionable conclusions about public taste.

First he asks whether there is any truth in the manufacturer's claim to know what the public wants. Manufacturers depend for their information on sales departments and travellers, who in their turn depend on retailers. But since ' the class from which most travellers, buyers, and smaller shopkeepers come is supposed to be one of the most reactionary classes in the country,' he suggests that it is their own bad taste which they express, and asserts that ' the houses in which they live and the prejudices with which they grow up make them less accessible to modern art than the professional as well as the working classes.' Next, from the fact that good selling lines include both ' inoffensive ' textiles and ' horrid modernistic ' carpets, ' simple and plain ' watches and ' thoughtlessly designed ' brooches, ' jagged orange glass ' light fittings and well designed gas and electric fires, Woolworth's well designed glass and also their ' vulgar floral ' pottery, he concludes that the public does not know what it wants. The fact that by consistent pushing over a long time the public was brought to buy steel furniture, or ' modern banded ' pottery, is taken to mean that it

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will buy what it is consistently offered, while its following ' without hesitation ' when manufacturers swamped the market with modernistic carpets means that its taste is blank. And this means that ' whether the manufacturer wants it or not he is forced to form the market.'

On one side he finds a blank and docile public, on the other reactionary salesmen leading the manufacturer to flood the market with bad design. (' Ninety per cent. of English industrial products are artistically objectionable.') ' Here is the furniture works selling 50,000 suites of one successful design in a year, here the cheap jeweller selling 200,000 cuff-links of one pattern, here the manufacturer of cheap motor-cars selling 100,000 cars a year, the firm manufacturing plastic mouldings selling 300,000 of the same tumbler each year, the aluminium works selling 100,000 kettles of the same type, the department store selling over 30,000 yards of one cheap satin in one colour during one year.' ' Again and again attention must be drawn to the overwhelming moral responsibility of any manufacturer whose products act on the taste of such an immense multitude.' But, lest the ethical case and the manufacturer's conscience are not by themselves enough, Dr. Pevsner reinforces them by suggesting that the public really wants good design. As proof he cites his own questionnaire and the fact that Finnish furniture, Swedish glass, steel chairs and architect-designed radio cabinets all sold well.

This seems a slight basis for an assertion which is so important to Dr. Pevsner's case. Moreover, for the suggestion to be plausible, he has to reject two lines of evidence. That of travellers and manufacturers, he says, is biased ; that of sales figures shows what the retailer stocked and not what the public wanted. The rich, of course, do have the opportunity of choice, and Dr. Pevsner is bound to admit that sales figures of expensive articles prove that the wealthy at all events are reactionary in taste. He pins his faith to the working and professional classes. Unfortunately he gives very few analyses of sales figures where choice was possible in the medium and low price ranges. Those that he gives dealing with medium priced pottery show that when the general public could choose, reactionary designs were three times as popular as the modern he approved of in tea ware, twice as popular in dinner ware and five times as popular in ornamental ware. More analyses

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of this kind would have offered useful evidence of the taste of the general public, and it seems doubtful whether they would have supported Dr. Pevsner's assertion. In any case the number and class distribution of people of reactionary taste could only satisfactorily have been measured by an enquiry among consumers, and until such an enquiry establishes them as confined to manufacturers, retailers and travellers, or as forming a small proportion of the public, manufacturers will continue to feel that their assertions about public taste are as well supported as Dr. Pevsner's.

Although Dr. Pevsner admits that the public admires technical achievements (such as a crucifixion with fifty people present carved on a cherry stone, or electric fires that imitate glowing logs) and chocolate box sentimentality, he regards blankness as the dominant feature of public taste. It seems possible that he has not only underestimated the extent to which these standards are satisfied by the industrial art he condemns, but that he has also overlooked other positive standards which such products satisfy. The contrasts which Dr. Pevsner noticed in what is bought might equally well indicate that the public has several standards which it applies sometimes singly, sometimes two or three together.

People of unpractised taste expect to be interested, and it is only in obvious ways that they can be. At the perceptual level they demand colour, movement in decoration, play of light—these can be found in modernistic carpets, cubistic light and door fittings, elaborately grained woods, cheap satins ; at the conceptual level in representational decoration, they expect sentimental appeal, they want something quaint, or cute, or ingenious—hence the demand for ' gondolas swimming in a printed and cut-out sea ' on walls, ' old world gardens ' on plates, powder boxes ' made to look like a grand piano,' or wireless cabinets that look like sunken treasure chests.

Objects for use are judged by standards formed from personal experience, subject to constant checks from the very fact of use. It is easy for the public to build up a standard of what is useful, and when it bases its choices on value for money, ability to stand hard wear and utility, its purchases meet with Dr. Pevsner's approval—inexpensive and efficient gas and electric fires, watches that will stand hard wear, cheap glass that is easy to keep clean. But when the public tries to follow Dr. Pevsner's exhortation to

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buy what it believes to be beautiful, the electric fire is 'embellished,' ladies' watches are as ' thoughtlessly designed ' as brooches, glass is elaborately cut. The public *knows* what is useful ; it has had to learn what is beautiful from people of ' taste,' and it is probably their debased and misunderstood æsthetic standards, derived from connoisseurs of the styles represented by the Wallace Collection, which lead it to buy products that Dr. Pevsner condemns. It does so not because it has no choice, but because it believes them to be beautiful, and because this kind of beauty is associated with social prestige. Expensive products are almost exclusively reproductions of these styles, because the rich are conservative, suggests Dr. Pevsner. It is equally probable that it is not mere resistance to change but active application of these æsthetic criteria which make rich and poor alike buy reproductions of period design or cheap imitations of reproductions.

Dr. Pevsner is aware that the desire for social prestige may also be more important in some cases than æsthetic considerations. But he seems to feel that snobbery is confined to the rich—' West End Trade Buys Period Design. Modern Schemes now too Popular,' as he quotes from a furnishing trade paper. Yet surely with many people snobbery lies behind the desire for ' luxurious ' bulbous suites with ' rich tapestry ' covers, the latest wireless cabinet or streamlined car, recognizably expensive sports goods or ' ultra-modern ' steel chairs? Snob appeal and good design may go together, as in the Ekco radio cabinet designed by Wells Coates for 1934, but the fact that this year's model fits comfortably into the prevailing mode suggests that Dr. Pevsner was over sanguine in supposing the public to have bought the 1934 cabinet on its æsthetic merits. Snob standards can in fact account for many of the contrasts in public taste, and although they can be manipulated by propaganda, they can hardly be called ' blankness.'

Only direct enquiry among representative groups of consumers could decide whether these standards or blankness were the dominant feature of public taste. By making no such enquiry Dr. Pevsner avoided putting his theory to the test. And yet his whole plan for improving public taste depends on a docile public. ' Manufacturers and retailers ought to endeavour to keep sales steady and yet to improve design.' If the public had standards which led it to resist pressure to buy the improved designs, would

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Dr. Pevsner's argument—that imitations are immoral and that one ought not to flee from contemporary life—be sufficient? If the wealthy overcame their resistance to change, and the poor followed as meekly as Dr. Pevsner expects, could modern design satisfy their demands? To appreciate modern design requires an ability to appreciate subtleties of line, form and colour imperceptible to many people. Even the wealthy might betray their deficiencies in this respect if they ever abandoned styles traditionally sanctioned as being in good taste ; and the poor undoubtedly ask for movement and colour violent enough to be seen. Nor does modern design offer much in the way of sentimental appeal. And finally rich and poor alike condemn it as poverty-stricken, because of its failure to live up to an amount-of-elaboration-per-square-inch standard. If there are positive standards such as these, is not Dr. Pevsner faced with the problem of helping the public to form satisfactory æsthetic standards as deeply rooted in personal experience as its standards of utility, instead of the much simpler one which he has set himself of preventing it from buying what it ought not?

Dr. Pevsner is not unaware of the need for training an appreciative public for modern industrial art, and sees that elementary education can provide a foundation. But to the quotation of the Pick Council's report on art teaching and the training of specialized teachers he adds ' All this is excellent.' Apart from the fact that the report's notion of handicraft is confined to wood and metalwork its results would depend on the meanings attached by teachers, according to their individual standards, to such vague phrases as ' well-designed common objects,' ' pictures,' ' the cultural aspects of handicraft.' So that after his approving glance at the healthy state of the art in elementary schools that follow Professor Cizek (one recalls the conventional sentimentality of so much child art and the gush of the New Education movement) the vague optimism and the hopelessly sketchy nature of Dr. Pevsner's own recommendations are no surprise, ' Schools should try more than they do as a rule to open up for the pupils an approach to the æsthetic qualities of works of art and architecture. Those who have been introduced to the beauty of line and composition found in a Gothic figure or a Holbein drawing or (this is indispensable) in an outstanding

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piece of contemporary architecture will not be satisfied in later life with the vulgarities they are offered in the average shop and store.' This will be rightly appraised by those who have seen how far children who have been ' introduced to the beauty ' of Shakespeare are ' dissatisfied in later life with the vulgarities they are offered' in the theatre and cinema. However, genuine education of the public is of less importance in Dr. Pevsner's eyes than propaganda. Children are to be ' introduced to ' beauties, not trained to discriminate. His use of the term ' educate ' is the same as the advertisers, and he asks for exhibitions to compete with theirs. That such methods would secure a following for modern industrial art there is little doubt. The question is whether followers are what is needed if you are concerned, not with reaching a point where ninety per cent. of industrial products are in Dr. Pevsner's terms ' acceptable ' or ' suitable in taste,' but with industrial *art*. Have the crowds at the proms

' who think all music good
If it's conducted by Sir Henry Wood,'

or those whose roars of applause greet *Le Lion Amoureux* or *Symphonie Fantastique* as equally art because both are called ballet, been of more value than a much smaller public that could offer relevant criticism? The answers to Dr. Pevsner's questionnaire show clearly that those sufficiently interested in modern design to go to an exhibition and fill in a questionnaire were not unanimously in favour of what they saw. Twenty-six liked a piece of architect-designed glass most, twenty liked it least. Twenty-five liked pieces of steel furniture most, seventeen disliked it. Those who answered included engineers, students, teachers, artists, designers and members of the professional classes, none of whom he considers to be antipathetic to modern design. Is it unreasonable to suppose that some of their criticisms might have been more valuable than docile approval?

Dr. Pevsner's main concern is not with the public—he believes it to be docile, and that is its part in his scheme. He is most concerned to get good designs produced. Supposing the manufacturer to be convinced of his moral responsibility to the public, and ready to adopt the suggestion that he employ ' a part-time designer or artist of high standing ' or—the method

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which Dr. Pevsner recommends above all others—an architect, how is he to be sure that he will not be condemned as was the engineer-manager who produced efficient fires and then (with a strong sense of æsthetic responsibility) got an artist to embellish them? He will be safe if he becomes, like Dr. Pevsner, a follower of the Modern Movement and employs one of its Architects. But is one, through following a Movement, qualified to act on the taste of immense multitudes? Are we not even now suffering, as Dr. Pevsner says, from the effects of the 1925 Paris exhibition and the movements it stood for, themselves washing away the last debris of peasantry, Edwardian baroque, and art nouveau? Dr. Pevsner himself provides a case in point. His estimates of the æsthetic value of industrial products are ' the conscientiously considered judgments of one who has tried to follow the ways of the Modern Movement in architecture, industrial art and the so-called fine arts on the Continent, and above all in Germany.' His criteria are ' the æsthetic laws underlying industrial design ' to be found in Herbert Read's *Art in Industry* which he reasonably regards as the most important English book on industrial art produced by the Movement. But one finds that Dr. Pevsner, who has a distinct liking for the introduction of ' straight lines, which is one of the features of our modern style ' becomes wistful because ' flat surfaces can only be obtained in a stronger . . . material, cheap and very light aluminium must be curved in order to become sufficiently firm,' and because bakelite takes most readily to curves. So far as I understand Mr. Read it is just these peculiarities of the medium which he expects to be *used* and not overcome by designers. Then too a rectangular watch, which is scarcely ' functional ' (have you tried to time eggs with one?) is approved, as well as a set of rectangular tea ware which would hardly face Mr. Read's standards as comfortably as the eighteenth century Wedgwood ware. Nor can one be certain that the dearth of ' real pattern effects ' in wall paper is quite as much a ' deplorable *testimonium paupertatis* ' as Dr. Pevsner feels it to be when the improvements suggested are trivial sprigs and tartans (architect designed) that do so much more than provide the background one wants a wall paper to be. If one conscientious follower falls below the standard of the Movement, may not the probably less conscientious manufacturer? A recent report in the press suggests that

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even the Movement's ' artists of high repute ' backslide. Several of the names that Dr. Pevsner conjures with are said to be working to produce a reaction from Dr. Pevsner's ' clean modern style,' replacing the masculine ' sublimated offices ' with ' homes ' expressive of the reign of George and Elizabeth. And what is to happen when the designers go all Hollywood boudoir and cocktail party as they did at the second Dorland Hall exhibition? If trusting manufacturers had borne the enormous cost of mass producing these designs it would have been a little more difficult to brush them aside, as Dr. Pevsner does this exhibition, with ' slightly too Corbusierish, I should say, for this country.' If they had followed these reputable up-to-date designers they might have felt that their consciences were clear, but they would still have been far from grace—they followed the wrong modern movement and Dr. Pevsner would still have had to lead them to the Bauhaus.

One heartily endorses the rather familiar suggestion for well equipped English art schools remodelled on Bauhaus lines. One agrees that ' it cannot be anything but advantageous to have the training of artists, architects, craftsmen, engineers and skilled industrial workers under one roof. This should protect schools from becoming " arty " as well as " tradey." ' That art schools should ' have the advantage of being faced with real life and could no longer be mistaken about the conditions under which their students will have to work ' is certainly desirable. But here again classes ' which are laboratories for experimenting with materials and basic processes,' ' supplemented by courses in basic composition ' and classes in elementary architecture, depend for their final results on the meaning attached to their being ' handled in the right spirit by the right men.' Dr. Pevsner is vague—but there is nothing to suggest that these classes will in fact do more than initiate designers into the ' modern style ' in much the same way as they are now initiated into, and taught to produce dead variations on, traditional styles.

It is at this point that the full significance of Dr. Pevsner's plan becomes apparent. The first step was to shift responsibility for public taste from the public to the manufacturer, and through him to the designer and architect. The second is to shift it from the architect and designer to those who select ' the right men ' to be in charge of schools and classes. But final responsibility belongs

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to the experts. Some are to form an ' entrance jury ' to a reformed D.I.A. which would see ' that only men of real artistic conscience could become members.' Such men would be ' allowed to use its initials.' (Manufacturers could then have no excuse for employing the wrong architect or designer). Members' work would be shown at an exhibition to be modelled on ' the famous Grassi Museum section at the Leipzig Fair, a section selected twice a year by independent art experts.' Large selection committees spell failure for exhibitions—' a muddled impression is bound to result unless the risk is taken of appointing one conscientious and distinguished expert belonging to the post-war generation (or, if that seems too dictatorial, a " Directoire " of three).' Presumably this suggestion would hold good for the D.I.A. members' exhibition and for the exhibition of the best foreign products which are to stimulate native designers. And this means that the ' modern style ' would be determined by a few experts, since the exhibitions would set the standards passed on in the schools. The total effect of such a plan would be to force on the public the personal taste of a few men in mass productions of the designs of a small number of architects and designers and their followers.

Although Dr. Pevsner's plan would prevent manufacturers producing period imitations or 1925 modernistic monstrosities, it seems extremely doubtful whether exhibitions and propaganda could give the public sufficiently deeply rooted standards to enable it to be genuinely appreciative of modern industrial art. It seems likely that it would produce on the one hand a following ready to be enthusiastic about modern design but unable to discriminate between mediocre and really fine examples of it, relying instead on the hall marks Dr. Pevsner provides—designers using D.I.A. initials, ' artists of high repute,' products sanctioned by experts through exhibitions ; and on the other hand a wider public unable to reject approximations to the more easily recognizable characteristics of ' the modern style,' which are becoming more frequent in Tottenham Court Road. This ' modern style ' still satisfies the demand for superficial interest and snob value and has æsthetic ' features ' sufficiently crude to be enjoyed by the unpractised: pastel tinted ' stream lined ' chairs and bedroom suites based on circles and arcs, fierce grainings to ' take off the plainness ' of simple forms, vague and meaningless scrolls, waves, hatchings and

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' textured effects ' in textiles. Possibly to Dr. Pevsner these are ' inoffensive ' since they haven't the worst features of period imitations. But if you are concerned to produce modern industrial *art* it seems essential to educate a public which can discriminate between productions in the ' modern style ' and modern industrial art, and to provide opportunities for relevant criticism from the public, as well as from professional critics, at the exhibition stage of production, rather than to rely on convincing manufacturers of their moral responsibilty to ' put across ' whatever the Architect has designed and the expert approved.

J. M. HARDING.

THERE'S ONLY ONE STURT

THE CARPENTER'S SHOP, by Walter Rose (Cambridge University Press, 8/6).

The publishers declare that readers of *The Village Carpenter* will enjoy, among others of their publications, *The Wheelwright's Shop*, and I believe this is quite justifiable but I doubt if the terms of the theorem are interchangeable. I enjoyed reading Sturt's book much as one enjoys making a wheelbarrow or repairing a well-made farm-cart—and I know one countryman, a labourer, who has read that book with the greatest interest, because it recreated for him the life that he feared had ' gone for good,' but when I lent him *The Village Carpenter* he declared ' he could not read it.' It is the ' recreation ' which gives to Sturt's work its peculiar distinction. Mr. Rose has, no doubt, the preliminary qualifications —the ' blurb ' tells us he is ' a master carpenter and the son and the grandson of master carpenters '—and his book is carefully planned on the same lines as Sturt's—the general plan is identical, the Grandfather, Old Enoch and Old Johnnie replace George Cook and Will Hammond, and there are direct verbal reminiscences throughout, as in the description of the saw-pit and the idea of the ' colonists of England '—but unfortunately there is no comparison possible between the literary gifts of the two authors, and this, naturally, must refer back to the ' awareness ' of the background.

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The prose in general—fortunately there are exceptions—is stilted and reads like bad Wordsworthian poetry which does not quite achieve verse-form, and this is noticeably so at the beginning where the intention is most obvious. Phrases such as ' I doubt not ' and ' like unto the streaks of a ripe apple ' abound in a language which seems strained, standing on tiptoe to reach the jam of a known effect. There is never the natural vigour of a vital folk speech which as recorded by Sturt throws up such vivid phrases as ' the queer scrunching yet ringing chackle,' but always Mr. Rose interposes his awareness of a literary convention between his living experience and its expression. Indeed he expressly states that ' it is easy to write the lingo of the workshop that a fellow-worker can understand ; to produce acceptable English is more difficult and more laborious.' He is very self-conscious and aware of what is expected of him and so there is no assurance in the ' larger rhythm ' but a jerky, embarrassing progression in jumps. Whereas Sturt recreates a living mode, Mr. Rose can only describe, point to, it in ' literary ' terms, in ' acceptable English.'

One reason for this failure may perhaps be found in the nature of the case—' the unfortunate experience of the wheelwright is not likely to be repeated for the carpenter, since there is no likelihood that man will discard the house for some other habitation,' as our author puts it, and so, perhaps, it is necessary for Mr. Rose to stand tiptoe to reach the jam. But to declare that is to indict the author of a failure to realize the actuality and the implications of the change in village life. This change is not discussible purely in terms of the actual tasks—indeed I was struck by the close similarity of the carpenter's work described here to that in my own experience of small-town carpentry. The same, or slightly different, methods are used among the carpenters of my acquaintance, and indeed Mr. Rose sometimes tries to force ' significance ' into what are actually local variations—as for example when he discusses roofing: the layman might be very impressed by the author's acceptance of the superiority of the ' iron square ' method of setting out a roof and might very well shake a knowing head at our present degeneracy, but the tradesman knows that the difference is not in age or ' respectability ' but in local variation. Even now the carpenter dispenses with his ' book-knowledge ' and trusts to the practical, traditional training of his apprenticeship,[1] and a

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man who has not ' served his time ' may even be ostracized. It is not so much there that the change lies—a wheelwright I know has even recalled his sons from well-paid city-carpentry to help cope with the increased work resulting from the recent prosperity of farming in his district, and this despite the introduction of rubber-tyred wheels and even of old motor-lorries to get in the harvest!—but in the change in the texture of village life, in the loss of that homogeneity in the culture. Of this Mr. Rose seems oblivious for he declares that ' it is to the incoming population from towns that we may look for the preservation of the village on new lines, and for the encouragement and revival of many of the old-time village-crafts.' That the village he anticipates should be such an arty-and-crafty one, might readily be gathered from the prose—and from the unfortunate introduction by Mr. Kendon—and the difference between this village and its predecessors might be deduced from the change from the style of the beginning to the more lively prose of those parts of the book where the author is describing directly his own work as a carpenter. When he stops to ponder on it he has to fill up the gaps with Style and then one wishes he had described, in ' the lingo of the workshop,' his work in much greater detail. With Sturt you *build* a dung-cart and are forced to live for the time-being in the setting to such work, but with Mr. Rose you can only touch the fringes of such a life through a series of generalizations. You have no doubt about the great loss implicit in the passing of a mode of life such as Sturt describes, but Mr. Rose himself is in doubt in his book. He is too thrilled with ' the release from drudgery provided by the machine.'

However, despite these faults and failings, this book is one which might be read at least once, and there are some excellent photographs.

F. C. TINKLER.

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[1]It is highly amusing (and instructive) to hear a carpenter of the younger school, with a smattering of geometry, try to ' explain ' the principles of setting out a roof which he has learnt in practice.

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G.B.S. AND MUSIC CRITICISM

LONDON MUSIC IN 1888-99 AS HEARD BY CORNO DI BASSETTO, by Bernard Shaw (Constable, 7/6).

Here are a few examples of Shaw's value-judgments about his contemporaries. Of Dvorak's Quintet:

> 'With worse executants it would have been found too full of odds and ends from the common stock of musical phrases, with the usual Dvorak dressing of Bohemian rhythms and intervals, which give the analytical programmist an opportunity of writing about 'national traits' and saves the composer the trouble of developing his individual ones.'

Of *Judith*, 'the greatest choral work since Beethoven's Requiem':

> '*Judith* consists of the sort of musical fabric that any gentleman of Mr. Parry's general culture, with a turn for music and the requisite technical training, can turn out to any extent needful for the purposes of a festival committee. There is not a rhythm in it, not a progression, not a modulation that brings a breath of freshness with it. The pretentious choruses are made of phrases mechanically repeated on ascending degrees of the chromatic scale, or of hackneyed scraps of fugato or of pedal point. The unpretentious choruses, smooth and sometimes pretty hymnings about nothing in particular, would pass muster in a mild cantata; in an oratorio they are flavourless. It is impossible to work up any interest in emasculated Handel and watered Mendelssohn, even with all the modern adulterations. The instrumentation is conventional to the sleepiest degree; tromboned solemnities, sentimentalities for the solo horn with tremolo accompaniment, nervous excitement fiddled *in excelsis*, drum points as invented by Beethoven and the rest of the novelties of modern scoring.'

And:

> 'We see now plainly enough that Mendelssohn, though he expressed himself in music with a touching tenderness and refinement, and sometimes with a nobility and fire that makes us forget all his kid glove gentility, his conventional sentimentality and despicable oratorio-mongering, was not in the foremost rank of composers. He was more intelligent than Schumann as Tennyson is more intelligent than Browning; he is indeed, the

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greatest composer of the century for all those to whom Tennyson is the great poet of the century.'

These are only a few of many quotable passages, but are sufficient evidence to support the statement that there is no popular weekly musical journalism being written to-day with anything approaching this degree of penetration and acuteness. Shaw's exposure of the conventionally sanctioned values of his time was relentless; subsequent critics, though they have covered many pages with anecdotical folderol, have really added almost nothing to Shaw's account of late nineteenth century composers because he had, indeed, said the last word about them. Such an ability to place his contemporaries in a hierarchy of value, argues not only unusual intellectual distinction but also exceptional emotional maturity and poise. It is true that Shaw was almost willing to accept Wagner at the latter's own valuation (and, in 1936, apologizes for this debility) but that was excusable, considering Wagner's indubitable personal magnetism; it required, at that time, a great creative artist like Verdi to stand out against Wagner. Besides, Shaw's comments on Wagner are, for a Wagnerian, unusually restrained; he saw that Wagner was the end of the nineteenth century, not the beginning of a new age, and his admiration is modified by his appreciation of Berlioz's 'exquisite threads of melody, wonderful in their tenuity and delicacy,' and by an extremely intelligent bracketing of Berlioz with Mozart which must have bewildered (and possibly still does bewilder) the academic pundits.

The difficulty, and the danger, of musical criticism lies in the fact that although the creation of a musical composition is in almost every case inextricably connected with the composer's experience of the concrete particulars of everyday life, these particulars disappear in the process of transmutation into music more completely than they do in the literary or pictorial arts, and the listener will inevitably tend to eke out his ignorance with some imagined psychological situation of his own. What the genuine critic does is to train the mind of the listener to seize on only those particulars which are, or seem to the best of the critic's comprehension to be, strictly relevant to the sincere response to the *musical* experience involved. He does not make the mistake of trying to define in literary terms what the music means, for the meaning of music is the music itself, and cannot be interpreted in any other terms. (This is proved by the fact that critics who try to do so

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almost always describe the degree or nature of the ' loveliness ' of a melody or what-else, as ' indescribable '). The critic cannot find verbal *equivalents* for the created experience which the music is—cannot explain in precise words how a composition effects him—but he can seek verbal correlations for, or references to, certain psychological attitudes which are implicit in this experience, and he may thus give some indication of the nature and value of the experience itself. He may help us to listen to music more sympathetically. Discussing sounds through the medium of words the musical critic works always, as it were, at one remove from the reality, and probably the only genuine musical criticism which has ever been written is not in words at all but in music itself, being contained in Busoni's transcriptions and arrangements—re-incarnations—of the works of the great masters. (The arrangements of the Bach *Chaconne* and the Mozart *Giga*, for instance, can tell us more about these composers, and Busoni's opinion of them, than many ponderous printed books, if we have the ears to listen to them). But as far as concerns the critic who uses words as his tools, it is obvious that musical criticism demands a literary knack, and a considerable degree of susceptibility to words as well as to sounds. It is also obvious that, considering the unavoidable clumsiness of his method of attack, he must be ready and willing to commit himself, must have the courage of his convictions. The concurrence of musical sensibility, literary ability, and moral courage is naturally extremely rare ; Shaw had all these qualities in some degree, and if he wasn't, didn't try to be, a great critic, he was very nearly a great journalist.

Above all, he had moral courage. His approach to music was a personal one. He aimed at making musical criticism readable at a popular level, he wrote as he talked, with wit and vivacity, and without extraneous jargon, stating directly and in the simplest terms why he liked or disliked such a composition. He maintained, beneath his frivolity, personal standards of intense seriousness, and the worthless composition he dismissed with curt contempt. (' The proper place for the first movement is the fire . . . '). Nowadays, we are more polite, or anyway, more oblique. Critics make a show of being ' objective,' and are so concerned to give every possible aspect of the case that they forget, or are unable, to have a point of view of their own. When we have toiled through their equable and impersonal pages we may have gained an iota of

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playful æsthetic cultivation, but we comprehend the music in question neither more wisely nor more deeply. Shaw put sincere original value-judgments first ; by so doing he built up his own criterion of value which enabled him to approach new and unfamiliar compositions with such sagacity and apparent clairvoyance. The cult of objectivity in musical criticism, admirable enough in theory, too often amounts to a refusal—which becomes an inability—to make first hand judgments at all. Shaw, notwithstanding his lack of critical ' method,' was never taken in by the really bogus or pinchbeck.

But this book is much more than a collection of penetrating musical reviews. There is, too, much sociological material, discussions about the relationship between the artist and his audience, about the conditions of music-making in England and the possibility of modifying and improving these conditions. He is aware in his criticism of a musical work how far social and economic factors may have gone to make it what it is. Thus he disposes of Cowen as ' Maida Vale drawing room music in old English fancy costume,' and remarks that nineteenth century civilization had a job after its own pocket in knocking the originality and exquisite radiance out of the young Mendelssohn of *Fingal's Cave* and the *Midsummer Night's Dream* and setting him to work on ' Stone him to Death and the like.' Connected with all this is the question of providing entertainment for the hordes of emotionally and intellectually undernourished members of the community ; the denunciation of the mushy inanities of the academic operetta that is fed to them, and of Gilbert and Sullivan, (' Mr. Gilbert's paradoxical wit is nothing to me . . . I could paradox Mr. Gilbert's head off *if I were not convinced that such trifling is morally unjustifiable.* [my italics]. As to Sir Arthur's scores, they are an easy introduction to dramatic music and picturesque or topical orchestration for perfect novices.') ; and the singularly acute comment, by way of simple relevant musical analysis, that the oratorio-mongering of the highbrows was essentially the same kind of dope ; (' set all that dreary fugue manufacture, with its Sunday-school sentimentalities and its music-school ornamentalities, against your recollection of the expressive and vigorous choruses of Handel, and ask yourself on your honour whether there is the slightest difference in kind between Stone him to Death and Under the Pump with a Kick and a Thump in Dorothy.'

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. . . ' Mendelssohn, who was shocked at Auber's writing an opera in which a girl sang *Oui c'est demain* (meaning Tomorrow I shall be a bride) at her looking-glass before going to bed, was himself ready to serve up the chopping to pieces of the prophets of the grove with his richest musical spice to suit the compound of sanctimonious cruelty and base materialism which his patrons, the British Pharisees, called their religion.'). The inevitable conclusion that the dreary state of music-producing in England implies a decadent state of society is made in a paragraph which is as remarkable for its dignity as for its wit:

> ' The truth is, that of the innumerable grades of culture and comfort between the millionaire on the one hand, and the casual labourer on the other, there is a maximum of relish somewhere. That somewhere is certainly not among the idle rich, whose appetite for enjoyment is not sharpened by work, nor is it among those who, worn out by heavy muscular toil, fall asleep if they sit quiet and silent for five minutes of an evening . . . *The* musical public is the shilling public, the innumerable ' poor devils ' of the middle class . . . What we want is not music for the people, but bread for the people, rest for the people, immunity from robbery and scorn for the people, hope for them, enjoyment, equal respect and consideration, life and aspiration, instead of drudgery and despair. When we get that I imagine the people will make tolerable music for themselves, even if all Beethoven's scores perish in the interim.'

So Shaw's socialist propaganda and his musical criticism are, in this book, complementary, interdependent. One couldn't wish for journalism more effective as propaganda, while remaining, as criticism, sincere, forthright, and unperverted.

It was perhaps his concern for sociological questions that made Shaw take his calling so seriously. Only through the application of rigorous critical standards will the public be protected from exploitation by oaf or charlatan. Even Bayreuth, Nirvana of the Wagnerian, is severely treated (' the Bayreuth cult shows the dangers of allowing to any theatre, however imposing its associations, the ruinous privilege of exemption from vigilant and implacable criticism '), and the most celebrated and fanatically lionized artists are discussed with healthy irreverence (' Madame Patti is surely getting too big a girl for this sort of thing '). The

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abuses of operatic and dramatic production are brilliantly satirized and seriously criticized and Victorian middle-brow moralistic criticism is wittily debunked in a paragraph (p. 377).

Good journalistic reviewing perhaps consists in frankly making moral judgments which may serve as a basis for discussion. Criticism consists in the analysis and exposition of these judgments. Journalistic comments, fortuitously thrown out but sometimes profound in their implications (' Beethoven was the first man to write gloomy music for its own sake,' for instance), abound in this book, but the only extended piece of criticism is an essay on Verdi written to commemorate the Italian composer's death. This essay is acute in, at that time, stressing the essentially Italianate and anti-Wagnerian nature of Verdi's music, but is insufficiently appreciative of the distinction between the last two Shakespearean operas and all the rest of his output (a distinction, I mean, in subtlety and maturity, not in kind, for they evolve logically from the earlier operas). Shaw's attribution of the increased complexity and delicacy, the greater ingenuity of orchestration, of these works to failing vitality seems to me perversely absurd. *Otello* and *Falstaff* are incomparably more vital than anything else in Verdi's opera and their superiority lies precisely in their greater subtlety. Their emotional quality is not less strong but it is finer, more sensitive. I suppose you can say that *Il Trovatore* is more alive than *Otello* ; it depends what you mean by life. But I do not think you can describe the difference as a *conscious* attempt to ' bring thought and knowledge and seriousness to the rescue of failing vitality.'

As for the early Italianate opera I do not see why Shaw, after giving an extremely able and just account of *Il Trovatore*, should think that the fact that some of the tunes are ' only common bolero tunes ' is necessarily to be deplored. And he seems to me short-sighted about the tiddly-pom guitar accompaniment and orchestration of the Bellini-Donizetti opera, which, properly performed, is a perfectly adequate and legitimate convention.

These are, anyway, only pernickety objections. What is odd, and perhaps worth investigation, is how the man who, in the eighteen-eighties, found the paradoxing of W. S. Gilbert ' morally unjustifiable,' should come to be content to spend the last twenty or more years doing just that.

W. H. MELLERS.

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THE CASE OF MISS DOROTHY SAYERS

GAUDY NIGHT (Gollancz, 8/6). 1935.

BUSMAN'S HONEYMOON (Gollancz, 8/6). 1937.

With the above two novels Miss Sayers stepped out of the ranks of detective writers into that of the best-seller novelists, and into some esteem as a literary figure among the educated reading public.

Only D. H. Lawrence (see *Phoenix*) could have reviewed these novels adequately. I confine myself to some incidental observations.

Miss Sayers belongs with Naomi Mitchison and Rosamond Lehmann (see *Scrutiny* for September, 1935, and September, 1936) and some others who are representative of the new kind of best-seller, the *educated* popular novelist. Like the Ouidas and Marie Corellis and Baron Corvos of the past they are really subjects for other kinds of specialist than the literary critic, but unlike those writers these are to some extent undoubtedly conscious of what they are doing (and so are able to practise more adroitly on their readers). Thus for instance the heroine of *Gaudy Night* is a Harriet Vane who writes detective stories, merely for a living and in all modesty for was she not an Oxford Scholar and a first-class in English. But returning to her Shrewsbury College after many years for an Old Students' celebration, she finds, with what grateful surprise, that not only her coevals but all the best dons clear up to the Warden (Philosophy) are ' fervent admirers ' and ' devotees ' (in their own words) of her writings. Miss Sayers can hardly be as artless as all that, and it is not surprising that the world has taken her tip and proceeded to talk obediently about her ' artistry ' and ' scholarly English.' The hero is of course Harriet's suitor and ultimate husband, and here again I think Miss Sayers has overstepped the limits of what even a best-seller's public can be expected to swallow without suspicion. Lord Peter is not only of ducal stock and all that a Ouida hero was plus modern sophistication and modern accomplishments—such as being adored by his men during the Great War and able to talk like a P. G. Wodehouse moron—he is also a distinguished scholar in history, a celebrated cricketer, an authority on antiques, a musician, a brilliant wit, a diplomat on whom the F.O. leans during international crises, a wide and deep reader and no doubt some other

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things I've overlooked. Whatever he does he does better than anyone else and he is one of those universal geniuses like Leonardo. Women naturally find him irresistible. Miss Sayers only omits to add like Ouida that ' He has the seat of the English Guards.' He does say however to his bride ' In the course of a mis-spent life I have learnt that it is a gentleman's first duty to remember in the morning who it was he took to bed with him ' and Miss Sayers does actually write of him (thus going one better than Ouida, who was a lady), ' He remembered that it had once been said of " ce blond cadet de famille ducale anglaise "—said too, by a lady who had every opportunity of judging—that " il tenait son lit en Grand Monarque et s'y démenait en Grand Turc." '

I will not comment further on the large part played in these novels by passages such as I have quoted, Miss Sayers being (unlike Mr. James Joyce and the late D. H. Lawrence, of whom reviewers could say what they liked with impunity) in such good standing with the respectable. But there is no harm in saying, since it is demonstrably true, that these two passages are fair samples of what Miss Sayers thinks on the one hand witty and on the other daringly outspoken ; and we are accordingly in a position to draw some conclusions about the taste of the public which likes such stuff and recommends it with conviction not merely as entertainment but as Good Stuff. For it is not, as you might have thought, as a successor to Marie Corelli and Ouida that Miss Sayers is valued.

This odd conviction that she is in a different class from Edgar Wallace or Ethel M. Dell apparently depends on four factors in these novels. They have an appearance of literariness ; they profess to treat profound emotions and to be concerned with values ; they generally or incidentally affect to deal in large issues and general problems (*e.g. Gaudy Night* in so far as it is anything but a bundle of best-selling old clothes is supposed to answer the question whether academic life produces abnormality in women) ; and they appear to give an inside view of some modes of life that share the appeal of the unknown for many readers, particularly the life of the older universities.

Literature gets heavily drawn upon in Miss Sayers' writings, and her attitude to it is revealing. She displays knowingness about

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literature without any sensitiveness to it or any feeling for quality—*i.e.* she has an academic literary taste over and above having no general taste at all (there can hardly be any reader of Donne beside Miss Sayers who could wish to have his poetry associated with Lord Peter's feelings). Impressive literary excerpts, generally 17th century (a period far-off, whose prose ran to a pleasing quaintness and whose literature and thought are notoriously now in fashion) head each chapter. She—I should say Harriet Vane—proudly admits to having ' the novelist's habit of thinking of everything in terms of literary allusion.' What a give-away! It is a habit that gets people like Harriet Vane firsts in English examinations no doubt, but no novelist with such a parasitic, stale, adulterated way of feeling and living could ever amount to anything. And Miss Sayers' fiction, when it isn't mere detective-story of an unimpressive kind, is exactly that: stale, second-hand, hollow. Her wit consists in literary references. Her deliberate indecency is not shocking or amusing, it is odious merely as so much Restoration Comedy is, because the breath of life was never in it and it is only the emanation of a ' social ' mind wanting to raise a snigger ; you sense behind it a sort of female smoking-room (see the girlish dedication to *Busman's Honeymoon*) convinced that this is to be emancipated. [How right, you feel, Jane Austen was not to attempt male conversation unless ladies are present].

The patter about value and the business of delving into emotional deeps seems to me more nauseating than anything else in the productions of this kind of novelist, not because anything much is said but because such clumsy fumblings stir up mud in the channels of life that heaven knows, we all know, it is hard enough to keep clear anyway. And in the matter of ideas, subject, theme, problems raised, she similarly performs the best-seller's function of giving the impression of intellectual activity to readers who would very much dislike that kind of exercise if it were actually presented to them ; but of course it is all shadow-boxing. With what an air of unconventionality and play of analysis Miss Sayers handles her topics, but what relief her readers must feel—it is part no doubt of her success—that they are let off with a reassurance that everything is really all right and appearances are what really matter. You may be as immoral and disillusioned as Lord Peter, and in fact immorality, etc., are rather fetching

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qualities and humorous too, but you MUST go to Church and be married in it, and whether you are intellectual, nudist or hard-up your frock MUST be well-cut—this seems to be the moral burden of these books. It would be unkind to boil Miss Sayers' wisdom down to this and label it What Oxford Has Meant to Me, but evidently Miss Sayers' spiritual nature, like Harriet Vane's, depends for its repose, refreshment and sustenance on the academic world, the ideal conception that is of our older universities—or let us say a rationalized nostalgia for her student days.

I think indeed that the real draw of *Gaudy Night* was its offering the general public a peepshow of the senior university world, especially of the women's college which has been less worked at by novelists than undergraduate life and has the appeal of novelty. [*Dusty Answer* made a similar hit]. It is a vicious presentation because it is popular and romantic while pretending to realism. Miss Sayers produces for our admiration an academic world which is the antithesis of the great world of bustle and Big Business that her readers know. Whereas in their world, she says, everything is ' unsound, unscholarly, insincere '—the implication being that the academic world is sound and sincere because it is scholarly—you have here invulnerable standards of taste charging the charmed atmosphere ('Thank Heaven, it's extremely difficult to be cheap in Oxford' says Lord Peter). If such a world ever existed, and I should be surprised to hear as much, it does no longer, and to give substance to a lie or to perpetuate a dead myth is to do no one any service really. It is time that a realistic account of the older universities was put into circulation. Unfortunately for Miss Sayers' thesis the universities are not the spiritually admirable places she alleges. People in the academic world who earn their livings by scholarly specialities are not as a general thing wiser, better, finer, decenter or in any way more estimable than those of the same social class outside. The academic world offers scope for personal aggrandisement much as the business world does, with the results you might expect. No one who has had occasion to observe how people get a footing in the academic world, how they rise in it, how appointments are obtained, how the social life is conducted, what are its standards, interests and assumptions, could accept Miss Sayers' romanticizing and extravagant claims (' " There's something about this place " said Peter, " that alters all one's values." '). In fact

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the more one investigates the academic world the more striking appears its resemblance to the business world (I recently met someone who had collected a lot of data showing this ; he was distressed). Here too to be disinterested or unconventional is to be eccentric and dangerous, here too to be materially successful you must be a good herd member, here too the trade-union and the club spirit obtain. Even assuming that the intellectual virtues Miss Sayers postulates are required by the scholar for his studies, it does not follow that these are carried over into his daily living ; in point of fact it is a commonplace of experience that they rarely are. Perhaps we need not call in the psychologist to account for this anomaly. And the academic is even more liable alas to be bogus as a specialist or scholar. Of course this is not surprising really, it would perhaps be more surprising if it were otherwise—only best-seller novelists could have such illusions about human nature—but the actual state of affairs everyone must feel to be unseemly, and in fact the accepted pretence is that things are as Miss Sayers relates. Perhaps this accounts for much of her success among the academics themselves ; certainly one would rather account for it like this than in any other way. Yet it would surely be healthier from every point of view if the critical winds of the outside world could be let blow through these grimy edifices, and perhaps they would if the facts ever leaked out and left a loophole for criticism to get in by. But popular novelists like Miss Sayers are busy shoring up these hallowed fragments against their ruin ; if Miss Sayers were more intelligent you could call it the latest case of *Trahison des Clercs*, but you suspect her of being a victim of propaganda herself.

But Miss Sayers is after all a product of Shrewsbury College as well as its producer. Who is responsible for this combination of literary glibness and spiritual illiteracy? Are her vices unique and personal? We all know they are not, experience confirms what her style of writing suggests, that she is representative. That inane wit, that unflagging sense of humour, those epigrams, that affectation of unconventionality, that determined sociality, what a familiar chord they strike. 'Are the women at S— College really like that?' someone says she enquired, after reading *Gaudy Night*, of someone on the spot. 'My dear, they are *much worse*!' At any rate Miss Sayers' fictions are clearly the product of a sympathetic milieu somewhere and one that pretty evidently had

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a university education. What is to be said for the female smoking-room that has set its approval on Miss Sayers? How far is Harriet Vane reliable when she reports her dons devoted to her novels? Some of the conversation of the oldest generation of women dons sounds convincing—Miss Sayers has caught the authentic acid note in personal intercourse and the genuine intellectual passion that distinguished them from the succeeding generations—and I don't think they would have had any use for Harriet's lucubrations ; but if the younger generation read her novels with pleasure as she alleges then the higher education of women is in a sadder way than any feminist could bear to contemplate.

What does seem indisputable is that Miss Sayers as a writer has been a vast success in the senior academic world everywhere. The young report that their elders recommend *Gaudy Night* to them, Miss Sayers has the *entrée* to literary societies which would never have opened their doors to Edgar Wallace, she is canonized as a stylist by English lecturers already, and so on ; after all her reputation as a literary figure must have been made in such quarters. Speculation naturally turns on how anyone can devote himself to the study and teaching of the humanities (we will let off the scientists in spite of their living in a place that alters all one's values) and yet not be able to place a Dorothy Sayers' novel on inspection if it comes his way. Well it does seem queer, but such a lapse is not without precedent. Run your eyes over enough academic bookshelves—not those housing shop but those where they keep what they really choose to read—and you get accustomed to a certain association of authors representing an average taste which is at best negative: Edward Lear and Ernest Bramah's *Kai Lung* (delicious humour), Charles Morgan and C. E. Montague (stylists), Rupert Brooke (or Humbert Wolfe or some equivalent) . . . we can all supplement. Dorothy Sayers can take her place alongside without raising any blushes ; these or their kind are the writers she admires herself. But doesn't it raise some awkward questions? What is the value of this scholarly life Miss Sayers hymns if it doesn't refine the perceptions of those leading it? If your work was of any value to you would you want, would you be able to relax on Edgar Wallace (much less on Dorothy Sayers)? Miss Sayers innocently presents her typical admirable scholar, an English don, engaged on her life's work of what but a History

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of English Prosody (an all too plausible undertaking). Apart from the fact that the lady was engaged in perpetrating a sort of public nuisance, think of the effect on the teaching of English in her college of that attitude to the study of poetry. No education could take place there ; studying English Prosody will not show anyone why Miss Sayers isn't a good novelist. That kind of scholarship never gears in with life. But is there any other kind? Miss Sayers however finds it wholly admirable. By this code, she says, the only unpardonable thing is to be unscholarly ; evil consists in producing a popular life of Carlyle without any research. But which is really worse, to be unscholarly or to pass writers like Miss Sayers? Mistakes about Carlyle are not a menace to civilization.

I once conversed on these or similar lines with a Professor of Classics, a man of genuine but diffident literary tastes. He remarked that it seemed unaccountable to him that the writings of a fellow-classic were so highly esteemed by his colleagues. He himself, he said modestly, had an unconquerable aversion to them, they seemed to him empty, the man's ' style ' cheap and his wit puerile, but none of his friends agreed with him, it was so discouraging and he felt he must be in the wrong. I said Not at all, his colleagues' insensitiveness to their native literature seemed to me an illustration of the evident fact that you could spend a lifetime in the study of any language ancient or modern, or any branch of the humanities, without acquiring the rudiments of literary taste or any apparatus for forming a just estimate of a piece of writing. And I added, no doubt brutally, What's the good of classics, what justification for a classical training can there be if it doesn't form a decent taste? My friend was taken aback. But he was a conscientious professor and he tried to find an answer. After a bit he brought out hopefully, ' Well, some people are interested in philology.'

I have always tried to bear that maxim in mind. After all philology is as legitimate a study as mathematics, and every branch of the humanities has its philological aspect so to speak. I recommend anyone at a loss before the spectacle of the scholar's bedside reading to adopt the above explanation. Miss Sayers, who might evidently have been an academic herself, is probably quite sound on the philological side.

Q. D. LEAVIS.

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ELIZABETHAN READING MATTER AND ELIZABETHAN LITERATURE

MIDDLE-CLASS CULTURE IN ELIZABETHAN ENGLAND, by Louis B. Wright (Chapel Hill. The University of North Carolina Press. English Agents, Milford. $5.00).

This is intended as a recommendation rather than a review of Mr. Wright's admirable book which, published in America in 1935, has not had much attention in England. It is one of those rare works of scholarship which the ordinary interested reader cannot afford to ignore. Mr. Wright has carved his way through an amount of reading matter which makes one gasp at human capacity, but the result is not —as so often— a suety lump of undigested information, but an illuminating commentary on the Elizabethan mind. Having started on any one of his solid chapters you have to read it straight through.

Until quite recently critics and scholars had a low opinion of Elizabethan literacy. The belief that the average Elizabethan citizen read next to nothing underlies such things as Bridge's essay on Shakespeare's audience and Miss Sheavyn's dissertation (which remains useful) on *The Literary Profession in The Age of Elizabeth*. The publication of the Short Title Catalogue in 1926 should have been sufficient to upset that modern complacency, and with the appearance of *Middle Class Culture in Elizabethan England* there is no excuse left for regarding Englishmen of the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries as generally unlettered.

Mr. Wright begins by illustrating the prevailing concern for learning that was displayed by the rising middle classes—a concern that was stimulated by the Reformation (' godly learning ') on the one hand, and by the development of commerce (' useful learning ') on the other. ' The faith in learning,' he says—and he brings evidence to support his statement—' never waned in middle-class consciousness throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for it was firmly believed that education was an instrument of salvation (religious, economic, and social) which would teach a way of life leading to business prosperity, social advancement, and an eventual seat at the right hand of God with

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Abraham and Isaac.' The middle classes founded and supported schools, they absorbed innumerable editions of popular educators, and they demanded an unlimited supply of books of all kinds—old romances and new novels, jest books, ballads and almanacs, histories, sermons, courtesy books, books of instruction in domestic relations and handbooks on thrift and the way to succeed in business. ' From the mid-sixteenth century onward, the number of average citizens who were buying and reading books was steadily increasing . . . In the century that followed the accession of Elizabeth, the habit of reading became so widespread that by the outbreak of the Puritan revolution, the printing press was perhaps the most powerful single medium of influencing public opinion.' Under such heads as ' Lessons in Diligence and Thrift,' ' Instructions in Domestic Relations,' ' Guides to Godliness,' ' The Utility of History,' ' Stories for Edification and Amusement,' ' The Wonders of Travel,' and so on, Mr. Wright shows how this increasing appetite for printed works was catered for. The real merit of the book, however, it not that it is rich in out-of-the-way information, but that it continually forces the question: What is the relation between this mass of popular reading matter, which served the various needs of the day, and those books and plays which proved themselves of permanent importance? Mr. Wright does not answer that question directly, but he provides ample material which those who want to understand the relations between 'great literature' and popular taste must take into account.

Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England makes the reader acutely aware of a paradox—or an apparent paradox. In the age of Shakespeare ' great literature ' was perhaps more firmly rooted in common life than it has ever been since ; certainly the upper ranges of the drama were related to popular taste more closely than the best writing of to-day is related to average middle-class or popular taste. Yet the popular literature of the Elizabethan period, as Mr. Wright shows, had many features in common with the popular literature with which we are familiar. If solid works were frequently reprinted,[1] so was trash ; and there are few modern

[1]Some examples taken at random: Thomas Elyot, *The Governor* (1531), eight editions by 1580 ; Hooker, *Of the Laws of Ecclesistical Polity*, eleven editions and two issues between 1594 and 1640 ;

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developments which cannot be paralleled in that obscure mass of printed matter which is rarely sifted by those who, when they think of Elizabethan literature, think of Spenser, Shakespeare and Donne. The chapter on ' Handbooks to Improvement ' supplies an amusing instance. Few things were more in demand than books supplying easy erudition—' glorified notebooks of miscellaneous lore '—which, together with verse anthologies and collections of quotations, riddles, epigrams and jests, helped to garnish Elizabethan conversation. One of these, *A Helpe to Discourse*, published in 1619, went through thirteen editions by 1638, and a prefatory poem informed the reader:

> Be then advertis'd this *Helpe to Discourse*
> Bespeaks thy future good, 'twill gently force
> Knowledge into thee ; and the generous wise
> Will know thee fit for all societies.
> If in thee, all or none of these finde roome,
> Others will speake, whil'st thou with shame sits dumbe.

The book, that is, set out to attract readers in exactly the same way as those recent summaries of ' The World's Best Literature ' which, the advertisements say, will prevent your wife being ashamed of you at dinner parties.[2] But it was not merely that the Eliza-

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Hall, *The Union of York and Lancaster* (1542), five editions in the next ten years ; Stow, *A Summary of English Chronicles* (1565), fourteen editions before 1618 extant (' perhaps other editions were read out of existence ') ; Stow, *Chronicles of England* (' *The Annals of England* '), 1580, eight editions before 1631 ; Holinshed's *Chronicle* (1577), second edition 1587 ; Camden's *Britannia* (1586), Latin version seven times reprinted by 1607, translated 1610 ; Raleigh, *The History of the World* (1614), ' the favourite historical work of the Puritans,' ten editions between 1614 and 1687; Drayton, *England's Heroical Epistles* (1597), six editions extant for the period 1598-1630 ; Fox, *Acts and Monuments* (1563), seven editions by 1632 ; Speght's *Chaucer* (1598), second edition 1602.

[2]Similarly, of the descriptive title of one of the popular letter-writing manuals, Mr. Wright says, ' The psychology employed in this appeal is precisely that of modern correspondence schools and the sundry books which promise to make the student fit for any

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bethans had susceptibilities which could, occasionally, be played on as easily as those of their descendants are played on by copywriters. They devoured a great deal of nonsense, they loved blood-and-thunder pamphlets, and they loved particularly unsavoury mixtures of the gruesome and the edifying (Professor Sisson's *Lost Plays of Shakespeare's Age*, for example, shows both plays and broadsides performing exactly the same function as the *News of the World*).[3] 'The ephemeral journalism of Shakespeare's time,' Mr. Wright says, 'was nearly as varied, and almost as abundant in proportion to the number of readers, as similar journalism is to-day.' It is facts such as these which have to be kept in mind when we talk of the popular bases of Shakespeare's art, and when we try to understand why conditions were somehow, after all, more favourable for the artist than they are to-day.

Now it is one of Mr. Wright's virtues that he can see the Elizabethan age in relation to later developments, and his habit of providing modern comparisons makes for lively reading, as when he exhibits pamphlets and poems in praise of London as early specimens of city-boosting: his examples are more amusing than anything in *Babbitt*. But the game can become too easy, and the comparisons may be superficial and misleading. There is, for example, the question of 'escape' literature. I am not at all sure how far one can accept such statements as the following:

> 'The sixteenth- or seventeenth-century ancestor of the shop-keeper who indulges in vicarious adventures in the shadowland of the cinema sought his escape from the humdrum existence of buying and selling, in the copious literature of romance . . .

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social or professional occasion.' I have pointed out that, in *The Devil is an Ass*, Meercraft's scheme for selling his toothpicks anticipates the Ivory Castle appeal of a firm of tooth-paste manufacturers.

[3]Miss Sheavyn quotes Drayton:

> Base baladry is so belov'd and sought,
> And those brave numbers are put by for nought,
> Which, rarely read, were able to awake
> Bodies from graves . . .

Similar complaints were of course numerous.

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Published in such cheap editions that anyone could buy them, these knightly romances provided the populace with a literature of escape analogous to that now supplied by a deluge of short stories and novels.' (pp. 375-376).

'If the tradesman of 1600 did not have magazines filled with narratives describing the climb of business men to success, he at least had Deloney's and Robart's tales of prosperous craftsmen and merchants. If there were no novels by George Barr McCutcheon detailing adventures in mythical Balkan kingdoms, there were innumerable romances, scarcely less absurd, that afford the tired business man of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the same avenue of escape from reality . . . Given proper justification for the reading of stories, the Elizabethan middle-class reader consumed fiction as voraciously and as uncritically as his modern descendant.' (p. 417).

It is useful to be reminded of the similarities between the Elizabethan age and our own, but it is even more important to be aware of the differences. Even if one accepts the definition of the romances as 'escape' literature, the implications of Mr. Wright's remarks need to be balanced—if we are to get the Elizabethan reading public in proper perspective—by other considerations. The Elizabethan reader had, to start with, a different environment from that of his modern descendent, and a criterion of human truth and naturalness was not so hard to come by as it is in an age of newspapers and book societies. And if life, for the majority, was humdrum enough, it offered neither the same incentives nor the same opportunities to 'escape from reality.' Mr. Wright of course admits that the Elizabethan reader was not subject to a pervasive pressure of commercial journalism and commercial fiction; but it was not merely that the mechanics of exploitation were imperfect. The romances say frankly, 'This is only make-believe,' and they do not, like *The Good Companions*, try to persuade you that reality is other than it is. And even Greene—'the Homer of Women'—expects his readers to be as much interested in his verbal play as in the impossible adventures of his heros. How far the chivalric romances were from being a merely enervating indulgence is suggested by the fact that Bunyan, as Mr. Wright points out, owed them a considerable debt; enjoyment of them was not, apparently, altogether incompatible with

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a shrewd evaluation of common experience. Elizabethan popular fiction in general is, of course, shot through with homely realism and weighted by a genuine, though naïve, interest in morals. Fiction, moreover, was not yet, with journalism, the *staple* reading matter. The middle classes enjoyed books which bore at least some resemblance to the reading matter of the educated.[1] And even if the ' public taste for journalistic divertissements was the same as it is to-day,' Elizabethan journalists, in common with the other popular writers, had the use of a lively and idiomatic language which they did nothing to debase, as innumerable quotations from obscure writers could be used to show. All this—though obvious enough—should be kept in mind to complement, rather than to contradict, Mr. Wright's comparisons between the common readers of the sixteenth and of the twentieth century.

Middle-Class Culture in Elizabethan England provides abundant material for thought about other important subjects which can only be touched on here. The chapter on ' Guides to Godliness,' without supporting the crude notion that Protestantism gave birth to Capitalism, admirably illustrates ' the fusion between religion and materialism which has always been a characteristic of bourgeois civilizations.'[2]—a fusion represented by the dedication

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[1]Mr. Wright discusses one of the handbooks of aphoristic wisdom designed for middle-class readers, *Politeuphuia, Wits Common-Wealth*, which, published in 1597, had twelve editions by 1630, and remarks: ' Perhaps it is significant that Bacon's first collected edition of *Essays* appeared in the same year as *Politeuphuia* and bore an outward similarity in subject, arrangement, and aphoristic treatment.' Bacon's *Essays* enjoyed an ' enormous popularity.'

[2]Religion is soon shaped to fit the peculiar wishes of a rising capitalistic nation. Protestantism, particularly in its Calvinistic branches, develops into a faith supporting property and the prudential virtues.' Mr. Wright illustrates from such books as Dent's *The Plaine Man's Pathway to Heaven* (1601), Hill's *The Pathway to Prayer and Pietie* (1610), and Bayley's *The Practise of Pietie* (1613), which had forty-three editions by 1640, and was ' imported in large quantities into early America.' This chapter should be read in conjunction with H. B. Parkes' essay on ' The Puritan Heresy,' in the *Hound and Horn*, January-March, 1932.

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of William Scott's *An Essay of Drapery : Or, The Complete Citizen* (1635), ' Wealth with peace of conscience be multiplied unto you.' The literary historian too will find in Mr. Wright's account of the development of middle-class ideals much that throws light on the cultural changes of the seventeenth century. For the increasing insistence on utilitarian studies combined with the Puritan distrust of ' idle reading ' to foster a new conception of education and of the good life. When, in 1649, George Snell, citizen and goldsmith of Lombard Street, demanded that, ' In teaching of necessarie Arts, there shall bee no superfluous and over-teaching, which is a grievous losing of time, but everie knowledge shall bee taught so far onely as the learner shall have occasion to use it,'[1] he was expressing a common attitude which obviously has an important bearing on the decline of the drama.[2] But it is not only the literary historian who will profit. Mr. Wright patiently exposes the first stirrings of beliefs and attitudes which were to dominate English and American civilization in the nineteenth century. If we seek the spiritual ancestors of that Mrs. Gooch whose Golden Rule (' Ever remember, my dear Dan, that you should look forward to being some day manager of that concern ') is celebrated in *Culture and Anarchy*, we shall find them amongst the almost forgotten writers of prudential maxims and handbooks to improvement in the seventeenth century. ' When the conception of " the moral duty of untiring activity " was fused with a belief in the godliness of thrift, the foundation was laid for the apotheosis of business efficiency . . . Indeed, the faith in the gospel of work and thrift became so ingrained that until recently it was far less subject to scepticism than the purely theological beliefs upon which the Puritans based their hope of heaven.' Mr. Wright, in fact, is not only concerned with the background of Elizabethan Literature but with the background of our own lives.

L. C. KNIGHTS.

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[1] *The Right Teaching of Useful Knowledge.*

[2] *cf.* John Webster, *Academician Examen* (1656): ' What is Grammar, Lodgick, Rhetorick, Oeconomicks, nay Metaphysicks, if they serve to no other use than bare and fruitless speculation?' ' Rhetorick, Oratory, Poesie, and the like ' serve for ' adornation ' of ' more solid services.'

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SHAKESPEARE AND MEDIAEVAL THOUGHT

SHAKESPEARE'S PHILOSOPHICAL PATTERNS, by Walter Clyde Curry (Louisiana State University Press, $2.75).

The process of putting Shakespeare's works back into the context of their age continues. In the main a salutary reaction to nineteenth-century bardolatry, it has nevertheless led to some curious exaggerations: we have had critics who refer all difficulties to unassimilated parts of the original sources, critics who explain everything by Elizabethan dramatic conventions, and critics who see Shakespeare's work as an embodiment of Elizabethan views on physiology and psychology. Faced with these various applications of critical determinism, the innocent reader might be pardoned for asking why, then, was Shakespeare so very different from his contemporaries?—and for a satisfactory answer he would have to go to those more concerned to respond sensitively to the actual poetry of the plays. The critic, of course, must be guided by the findings of the scholars, but the scholar who makes generalizations from a particular line of study without undertaking the arduous task of an adequate reading of the poetry is usually only adding to the general confusion. Miss L. B. Campbell's *Shakespeare's Tragic Heroes* is a case in point: here one legitimate line of investigation (the study of the Elizabethan psychology of passion) has been erected into a substitute for a sensitive response to the plays themselves, with consequent distortion.

Professor Curry, whose study bears a superficial resemblance to Miss Campbell's, though he is concerned with philosophy rather than psychology, is at least more cautious in that he carefully disclaims any critical intention. His aim is to show that some of the plays, particularly *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*, employ philosophical concepts which are strictly mediæval, and that many mediæval doctrines were still current intellectual coin in Shakespeare's day. This latter point is, I think, important, and one that is perhaps not sufficiently realized. It is not a question of Shakespeare reading Aquinas, as Donne probably did, but of the general heritage of mediæval ideas which must have co-existed for some time with the new philosophy which was calling all in doubt—a heritage,

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as Professor Curry says, more or less unconsciously absorbed. The philosophical pattern of *Macbeth* is said to be connected with a body of scholastic doctrines, while that of *The Tempest* is related to traditional Neo-Platonic conceptions. In each case we are given several chapters of wearisomely thorough and minute documentation. In the chapter on *The Demonic Metaphysics of Macbeth* Professor Curry argues convincingly that the witches answer to the mediæval idea of diabolical powers, literal 'instruments of darkness,' and that for the Elizabethan audience all the manifestations of the supernatural were directly connected with an objective evil reality. In these days of rationalized stage-performances in which the supernatural element is made to appear as subjective as possible, it is as well to be reminded that when Lady Macbeth invoked the 'murdering ministers' and the 'spirits that tend on mortal thoughts' she was, for the Elizabethans, deliberately inviting demonic possession, and that her later behaviour, especially the sleep-walking, would be recognized as that of a possessed person. Similarly the development of Macbeth's character corresponds closely to the scholastic description of the further development of evil in a personality which has once committed a crime. The play is based, then, on the mediæval Christian conceptions of objective evil and supernatural grace; in fact, Professor Curry provides a background of scholarship for the interpretation given by Mr. L. C. Knights in *How Many Children had Lady Macbeth?*

The chapters on *The Tempest* are less satisfactory—not that the conclusions are unconvincing, but that they do not seem to help much toward an understanding of the play. When Professor Curry assures us that Prospero represents the theurgist, or practicer of white magic, while Sycorax is connected with goety or black magic, we are hardly enlightened more than when Mr. Colin Still, outdoing Fluellen, asserts that there is a parallel between *The Tempest* and the Eleusinian mysteries as described by Warburton, because there is a masque of reapers in *The Tempest* and a ceremony involving a grain of corn in the mysteries. But the idea of Prospero's upward progress from magic to a purer stage of contemplation, according to Neo-Platonic doctrine, is interesting; and at least this account might serve to correct the crude cinematic version of the play given in Mr. George Garrett's

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recent essay *That Four-Flusher Prospero*,[1] which is simply Bradley stood on his head. (One suspects that Mr. Garrett might even think that Caliban symbolizes the down-trodden proletariat).

Professor Curry's appendix on dramatic patterns is really an excursus into criticism ; it is inadequate because he does not seem to realize sufficiently clearly that rhythm, imagery, plot, character, philosophy and so on are all ' precipitates from memory,' and only exist in the dramatic poetry itself. There comes a point where the limitations of pure scholarship are apparent: but at least Professor Curry's investigations are of the kind which may be useful to the critic.

R. G. Cox.

'THE BOOK OF THE WEEK'

DAYLIGHT AND CHAMPAIGN, by G. M. Young (Cape, 8/6).

The publishers have really reviewed Mr. Young's book for me:

> ' In the best of tempers, *sine ira et odio*, he celebrates the obsequies of English culture, and goes home to reflect benevolently on the merits of the departed. What good company one used to meet there, from Herodotus to Disraeli! What excellent music after dinner! What a house, too, where you slept in a medieval turret and had your bath in a powdering closet! And what an estate!
>
> ' In this estate Mr. G. M. Young has a life-interest, and, as the heir and his intentions are equally unknown to him, he enjoys it with equanimity, and is never happier than when he is showing visitors its beauties. At heart he is, like Julian, " rather serious." But he sees no reason why he should trouble his guests with ineffectual regrets. It is much better, when the day's work is done, to lean over a gate and yarn with Virgil or Dickens or William Morris. He likes tractors and pylons as little as he likes the poetry of Mr. T. S. Eliot or the novels of Mr. Aldous Huxley. But so long as the estate is kept up, he is prepared to be tolerant. Some of the younger tenants, too, are promising lads. His graver judgments are to be read in his *Portrait of an Age*. This volume contains such meditations as occur to him day by day as he walks about the estate, with a sharp eye for such vermin as Liberals,

[1] *Shakespeare Survey*, by William Empson and George Garrett (Brendin Publishing Co., 1/-).

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Examiners, poets whose verses do not scan, and biographers who peep through keyholes.'

One can add very little to so apt a characterisation. Mr. Young discourses ' pleasantly ' about any book that has been sent to him from *Road to Oxiana* by Robert Byron to Dickens' letters to his wife. In each case he provides an air of scholarship and of cultivated taste, but he rarely comes to a conclusion or makes a real judgment. He begins his review of Mr. Stephen Spender's *Forward from Liberalism* with an effective demonstration from the vagueness of his style of his muddle-headedness, but he then drifts away towards the semi-serious. He invites us to admire the scholarship of Mr. Lewis's *The Allegory of Love,* but lays equal stress on the dullness of a great deal of its subject matter. He writes quite well on George Eliot, and has a very good aside on Bridges (p. 197), but the following from his review of *The Oxford Book of Modern Verse* seems to me, if it is meant seriously, to show a total incapacity to read any poetry whatever: ' I say that a line scans when, without any straining of the words or melody, it can be sung to an easy and popular tune. Such tunes capture and record the instinctive habits of a language. With the usual allowance for occasional virtuosities and experiments, every line of English verse from the Elizabethan settlement of our poetry until quite recent times, will be found to conform to this test.' And if so, what? In the essay called *The New Cortegiano,* one discovers what happens when anyone suggests that the estate of English letters needs fundamental reorganisation ; Mr. Young sets the bull-terrier on them and goes away sniggering to negotiate another mortgage. He has a great respect for Victorian culture and suggests with justice that it was an essentially ' middle-brow ' culture (to use the shorthand labels), but he neglects the fact that it was not ' anti-highbrow ' and that responsible critics then endeavoured to keep readers in touch with the best that was known and thought in the world. Reviewers in Mr. Young's position might be carrying on that work, but instead, while deploring the state of taste, they continue the business of book-pushing, assisted by their carefully guarded prestige, and brand as ' terrorists ' those who protest against this elegant academic exploitation. Mr. Young solicits the help of Mr. Wells to give a temporary backing to the crazy machine, and creates Mrs. Woolf a sort of guardian dowager for the years to come.

GEOFFREY WALTON.

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THE WILD, UNTUTORED PHOENIX

PHOENIX: The Posthumous Papers of D. H. Lawrence (Heinemann, 21/-).

Lawrence is placed—is, in fact, distinctly *passé*; we are no longer (if we ever were) very much impressed by him. He had, of course, there's no denying it, a kind of genius, but to take him seriously as an intellectual and spiritual force, a force that could affect our attitude towards life and the problems of our time—it's amusing to think that there were once earnest souls who did so. To-day, while recognizing the queerly limited gifts he dissipated, we hardly bother to smile at his humourless fanaticisms.

At least, that's the impression one gets from the literary world to-day (I mean the milieu in which fashions are set and worn and the higher reviewing provided for). Lawrence is decidedly out of favour—in fact, he was never in, for it was without permission that he won his fame, and he was patently not the kind of writer who would ever earn permission. *Phoenix* came out a year ago, but it is still worth calling attention to as an admirable reminder of the qualities that make our ruling literary intellectuals feel that his fame had better be encouraged to fade as quickly as possible.

Here, for instance, in this collection of dispersed papers, he appears as an incomparable reviewer (presenting, that is, a standard that our higher literary editors couldn't be expected to take seriously). We remember that neglected critical masterpiece, *Studies in Classical American Literature*, and may very well go on to ask what kind of gift it was that made D. H. Lawrence the finest literary critic of our time—a great literary critic if ever there was one. We know it can't have been intelligence; for Mr. Quennell's view[1] that (in contrast to the superlatively intelligent Mr. Aldous Huxley) he was, though a genius, muddle-headed is generally accepted (and did not Mr. Eliot find in Lawrence 'an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking'?).[2]

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[1]See *Scrutiny* for June, 1936, p. 98.
[2]*After Strange Gods*, p. 58.

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Yet here, in these reprinted reviews, we have Lawrence dealing under ordinary reviewing conditions (he needed the money) with books of all kinds—H. G. Wells, Eric Gill, Rozanov, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Baron Corvo, fiction, poetry, criticism, psychology—and giving almost always the impression of going straight to the centre with the masterly economy, the sureness of touch, of one who sees exactly what it is in front of him and knows exactly what he thinks of it. Here he is on H. G. Clissold Wells:

> ' His effective self is disgruntled, his ailment is a peevish, ashy indifference to *everything*, except himself, himself as centre of the universe. There is not one gleam of sympathy with anything in all the book, and not one breath of passionate rebellion. Mr. Clissold is too successful and wealthy to rebel and too hopelessly peeved to sympathize.
>
> ' What has got him into such a state is a problem ; unless it is his insistence on the Universal Mind, which he, of course, exemplifies. The emotions are to him irritating aberrations. Yet even he admits that even thought must be preceded by some obscure physical happenings, some kind of confused sensation or emotion which is the necessary coarse body of thought and from which thought, living thought, arises or sublimates.
>
> ' This being so, we wonder that he so insists on the Universal or racial *mind* of man, as the only hope of salvation. If the mind is fed from the obscure sensations, emotions, physical happenings inside us, if the mind is really no more than an exhalation of these, is it not obvious that without a full and subtle emotional life the mind itself must wither: or that it must turn itself into an automatic sort of grind-mill, grinding upon itself.'

His critical poise is manifested in (*pace* Mr. Eliot) a lively ironic humour—a humour that for all its clear-sighted and mocking vivacity is quite without animus. For, idiosyncratic as Lawrence's style is, it would be difficult to find one more radically free from egotism.

> ' Professor Sherman once more coaxing American criticism the way it should go.

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' Like Benjamin Franklin, one of his heroes, he attempts the invention of a creed that shall " satisfy the professors of all religions, and offend none."

' He smites the marauding Mr. Mencken with a velvet glove, and pierces the obstinate Mr. More with a reproachful look. Both gentlemen, of course, will purr and feel flattered . . .

' So much for the Scylla of Mr. Mencken. It is the first essay in the book. The Charybdis of Mr. P. E. More is the last essay: to this monster the professor warbles another tune. Mr. More, author of the *Shelburne Essays*, is learned, and steeped in tradition, the very antithesis of the nihilistic stink-gassing Mr. Mencken. But alas, Mr. More is remote: somewhat haughty and supercilious at his study table. And even, alasser! with all his learning and remoteness, he hunts out the risky Restoration wits to hob-nob with on high Parnassus; Wycherley, for example; he likes his wits smutty. He even goes and fetches out Aphra Behn from her disreputable oblivion, to entertain her in public.'

The humour seems to me that of a man whose insight into human nature and human experience makes egotism impossible, and I find myself, in fact, in thus attributing to him an extraordinary self-awareness and intelligence about himself, seeming to contradict Mr. Eliot, who denies him ' the faculty of self-criticism ' (*op. cit.*, p. 59). Lawrence does indeed characteristically exhibit certitude and isn't commonly to be found in a mood of hesitation or self-condemnation (though his art is largely a technique of exploration—exploration calling for critical capacity as well as courage); but in purity of interest and sureness of self-knowledge he seems to me to surpass Mr. Eliot, even though he pays no respects to criteria that Mr. Eliot indicates as essential.

' A man like Lawrence, therefore, with his acute sensibility, violent prejudices and passions, and lack of intellectual and social training . . . ' (*After Strange Gods*, p. 59).

—I have already intimated that the acuteness of Lawrence's sensibility seems to me (whatever Bloomsbury may have decided) inseparable from the play of a supremely fine and penetrating intelligence. And if one is to agree that Lawrence lacked intellectual

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and social training, one would like to be shown someone who didn't or doesn't. It's true that he didn't go to Oxford or Harvard, and that his family was of a social class the sons of which, at that time, had little chance of getting to one of the ancient universities. But few readers of the memoir of Lawrence by E.T.[1] will, I imagine, however expensive their own education, claim with any confidence that they had a better one than Lawrence had.

At school, and later at University College, Nottingham, whatever their faults (and he says some stringent things about the College), he got sufficient stimulus and sufficient guidance to the sources and instruments of knowledge to be able, in intercourse, social and intellectual, with his friends, to carry on a real education. They discussed their way eagerly over an extraordinary range of reading, English and French, past and contemporary (Lawrence hit on the *English Review*, then in its great days), and it is difficult to imagine adolescents who should have read more actively and to greater profit. For, belonging as they did to the self-respecting poor in a still vigorous part of the country, not only was their intellectual education intimately bound up with a social training (what respectable meaning Mr. Eliot, denying a ' social training ' to Lawrence, can be giving the phrase I can't guess) ; they enjoyed the advantage of a still persistent cultural tradition that had as its main drive the religious tradition of which Mr. Eliot speaks so contemptuously. And the setting of family life (quite finely civilized and yet pressed on by day-to-day economic and practical exigencies) in which these young people met and talked was in sight of—in immediate touch with—on one side the colliery (Lawrence's father was a miner) and on the other the farm (Miriam's father was a small farmer). It seems to me probable that D. H. Lawrence at twenty-one was no less trained intellectually than Mr. Eliot at the same age; had, that is, read no less widely (even if lacking Greek), was no less in command of his capacities and resources and of the means of developing further, and had as adequate a sense of tradition and the nature of wisdom. And it seems to me probable that, even if less sophisticated than Mr. Eliot, he was not less mature in experience of life.

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[1] *D. H. Lawrence*, by E.T. (Cape).

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> 'Some can absorb knowledge, the more tardy must sweat for it. Shakespeare acquired more essential history from Plutarch than most men could from the whole British Museum.'

—Lawrence was not Shakespeare, but he had genius, and his genius manifests itself in an acquisitiveness that is a miraculous quickness of insight, apprehension and understanding. The 'information' that Mr. Eliot doesn't deny him ('a lack not so much of information as . . . ') is more than mere information; he had an amazing range and wealth of living knowledge. He knew well at least four languages besides his own, and it is characteristic of him that in reviewing Cunninghame Graham's *Pedro de Valdivia* he not only shows a wide general knowledge of the Spanish conquests, but, referring to the original Spanish particular instances of Cunninghame Graham's rendering, censures him for 'the peculiar laziness or insensitiveness to language which is so great a vice in a translator.' What those qualified to judge think of Lawrence's dealings with painting I don't know, but he certainly shows an extremely wide and close acquaintance with it, deriving from an obviously intense interest. This appears notably, not only in the *Introduction to these Paintings*, but also in the *Study of Thomas Hardy*.

This long *Study of Thomas Hardy*, perhaps, represents the kind of thing that Mr. Eliot has especially in mind when he charges Lawrence with 'an incapacity for what we ordinarily call thinking.' It is an early work, and hasn't much to do with Hardy. Lawrence frankly admits that he is using Hardy as an occasion and a means, and that his real purpose is to explore, refine and develop certain ideas and intuitions of his own. I found the study difficult to read through; it is diffuse and repetitive, and Lawrence has dealt with the same matters better elsewhere. Yet in the persistent integrity of this exploration the genius is manifest, and without this kind of work we couldn't have had the later ease, poise and economy, and the virtues in general that compel Mr. Eliot to say:

> 'As a criticism of the modern world, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* is a book to keep at hand and re-read.'

If Lawrence's criticism is sound that seems to me to be because of the measure in which his criteria are sound,

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and because they and their application represent, if not what we ' ordinarily call thinking,' an extraordinarily penetrating, persistent and vital kind of thinking. He says (p. 611):

> ' What good is our intelligence to us, if we will not use it in the greatest issues? Nothing will excuse us from the responsibility of living: even death is no excuse. We have to live. So we may as well live fully. We are doomed to live. And therefore it is not the smallest use running into *pis allers* and trying to shirk the responsibility of living. We can't get out of it.
>
> ' And therefore the only thing is to undertake the responsibility with good grace.'

It is Lawrence's greatness that he was in a position to say this; he was, in fact, intelligent as only the completely serious and disinterested can be. Those who plume themselves on being intelligent but find this notion of intelligence uncongenial will prefer Mr. Wyndham Lewis—even a Wyndham Lewis who comes out for Hitler.

I was reminded of Mr. Wyndham Lewis by this in *Phoenix* (p. 271):

> ' Wyndham Lewis gives a display of the utterly repulsive effect people have on him, but he retreats into the intellect to make his display. It is a question of manner and manners. The effect is the same. It is the same exclamation: They stink! My God, they stink!'

The Lawrence who thus places Wyndham Lewis seems to me the representative of health and sanity. Mr. Eliot's reactions to Lawrence are, of course, at a different level from those referred to at the end of the last paragraph, the common petty reactions of the literary world, and the case that Mr. Eliot argues does, at its most respectable, demand serious attention. But it is odd that he should, in pronouncing Lawrence ' spiritually sick,' be able at the same time to invoke Wyndham Lewis's ' brilliant exposure ' and ' conclusive criticism ' of any side of Lawrence. And it is odd also that in the book in which he finds in Lawrence a lack of intellectual and social training he should be able to take

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Mr. Ezra Pound and Dr. I. A. Richards as representatives of the ' highly educated and fastidious.'

* * *

I hadn't intended to end on this note. But my attention has just been drawn to Mr. Eliot's essay in *Revelation*. He treats Lawrence there still more respectfully than in *After Strange Gods*, but can say:

> ' For Babbitt was by nature an educated man, as well as a highly well-informed one: Lawrence, even had he acquired a great deal more knowledge and information than he ever came to possess, would always have remained uneducated. By being " educated " I mean having such an apprehension of the contours of the map of what has been written in the past, as to see instinctively where everything belongs, and approximately where anything new is likely to belong ; it means, furthermore, being able to allow for all the books one has not read and the things one does not understand—it means some understanding of one's own ignorance.'

—Irving Babbitt, all one's divinations about whom have been confirmed by the reminiscences and memoirs of him that have appeared since his death! Babbitt, who was complacently deaf and blind to literature and art, and completely without understanding of his incapacity ; who, being thus in sensibility undeveloped or dead, can hardly, without misplacing a stress, be called intelligent! Even as Mr. Eliot quotes him and comments on him he appears as the born academic (is that what ' by nature an educated man ' means?), obtuse—Mr. Eliot seems almost to bring out the word—obtuse in his dogged and argumentative erudition.

How can Mr. Eliot thus repeatedly and deliberately give away his case by invoking such standards? It is an amazing thing that so distinguished a mind can so persistently discredit in this way a serious point of view.

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